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[FALSE.]

THE MYSTERY OF HIS LOVE; OR, WHO MARRIED THEM?

By the Author of "Christine's Revenge; or,
O'Hara's Wife."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.

Forlorn soul, God pity thee
And guide thee on thy lonely way;
And he who wrongs thee then shall see
The dawning of a purer day.

GRACE, LADY ANERLY, listened to the words that were spoken behind that hedge of laurels as a trembling prisoner listens to the dread sentence condemning him to death on the scaffold. It is a question which of two human beings might be said to endure the greatest amount of anguish while listening to the utterances of a certain human voice, a lady to whom the world bows down; a lady with carriages and servants at her command; a young wife who will one day be the richest countess in England, and who has already more jewels than she can count; a Lady Anerly with grand town houses and superb country seats; a Lady Anerly who is refined, and cultivated, and intellectual; a young married lady of title who has all these

advantages, or a wretched criminal shrinking and shuddering in the dock; a man who has all his life known want, and pain, and hunger, and cold, a being who has gone through the world despised and trampled on until he turned and fought a hand-to-hand fight with society and respectability, and went on from deeds of wrong to deeds of bloodshed, and now about to be condemned, stands trembling in the dock before his judges, and cowers while he hears that his life will be taken from him by the law—we say it is a question which of these two human creatures, the lady or the condemned felon, endures the most anguish? The felon, when the judge pronounces those words: "Shall hang by the neck till you are dead," or the titled, high-bred young wife, when the husband of her youth, the hero of her mad idolatry, he whom she had worshipped (as it is in some women to worship a man) with constancy, with faith in his superiority, with self-sacrificing, slavish devotion; we repeat when this husband speak words which make her life seem useless, and paltry, and hurtful to her as the cast off rags of a beggar may seem to him—listen to what Alfred, Lord Anerly, said in the hearing of his wife, Grace:

"I love you, Laurette, and only you. No seas can quench my love; it is deeper than my life; and now, oh! I would fling up everything, home, wealth, position—everything, and fly with you, but you despise me."

"I care nothing for you. My good Alfred, it would be too much exertion for me to take the trouble to despise you. All I want is more money. I lost a thousand pounds last week at Homberg at baccaret—it is a very gambling game. Write me a cheque for fifteen hundred pounds,

that is all I want. I heard you were here, and so came on to ask you for this money. I had no other thought, I assure you. I don't wish to interfere with your 'domestic felicity.' Ha!—ha! What kind of creature is this wife? Spoony to a degree, is she not, as all red-haired people are?"

"She is spoony, and a blue-stocking in her way. Loves art and literature, and fancies that I love her, but simply that I am not demonstrative; in that way she consoles herself for my shortcomings in the way of affection."

"Poor wretch," said the gay, cold voice of Laurette, "she is not worth calling a rival; but do you know, my Lord Alfred, as the years go on, and I pass the barrier line between first youth and ripe womanhood, and so get on towards chill middle age, I shall begin to be envious of those who now are in their cradles. Say in sixteen years from now, when I am forty years old, some blooming girl may win that love of yours which I cannot return, because it is not in me to love anyone; but—but still I should hate a girl or a woman if ever you cared for her. I think my vanity would suffer so that I should kill her."

"That will never be, Laurette. I shall never love another woman than yourself as long as I live."

The young noble and Laurette then turned into a side walk, and Grace Lady Anerly heard no more. But this young lady told herself that she had heard enough to blot out the brightness of the sun and the moon and the stars from all the future of her life, and to write these words: "Hope is dead" on the green earth at her feet, on the bosom of the blue river by her side, on

the arch of the eternal heavens, over her head, in letters as of fire and of blood.

For a few moments she looked at the blue river as it flowed at her feet, and asked herself if she should plunge beneath its bright waters and disappear for ever from the eyes of the man who made mockery of her and of her love to another woman. But Lady Grace came of no coward stock; her name was an ancient one; the men of her race had ever been brave; the women loving of heart and chaste of life. Why should a refined, and gifted, and noble, and youthful lady die the death of a mad cur?—drown in the waters of a deep river?

"No! I will live and face it out! Live! It will be brave to live with this raging pain for ever at my heart, and to smile and face the world and hide—hide this anguish as the Spartan boy hid his death throes while the fox tore at his brave heart. Yes, I will live and I will smile, and I will even bear this traitor a son and heir, if needs must, only as day follows day, I will learn to stifle this love which has been my bane and my curse. This woman, he called her Laurette, if I could find her out and kill her?"

Grace clenched her delicate white hand, and for a moment ground her white, even teeth in the impotence of her rage and despair.

"But afterwards," she went on, "afterwards; if I killed her in my mad rage I should live to repent me. No, I will not let this anguish turn my heart to gall and make me a demon instead of a woman. Oh, help me, Heaven!"

She sank on her knees there by the side of the swiftly-flowing river, and prayed long and silently that the Creator would not suffer her to become an evil creature, because she must henceforth be a miserable and disappointed one, but that she might learn to feel for the woes of others, to assuage the sorrows of the sorrowful, the sufferings of the sufferers in this wide world of turmoil and care. And then she stole away towards the hotel, where she, with her husband, Lord Anerly, occupied a grand suite of apartments, while another suite was devoted to their servants, for they brought seven domestics with them on their travels.

"I will hide this grief, and I will pray," said noble, impassioned Lady Grace, to herself.

She was not a beautiful woman, but there was a majesty about her as she walked through the wide corridors of the foreign hotel, a certain grandeur which impressed a lad, who watched her as she swept along towards her own chambers. He meanwhile was leaning on the balustrade at the head of a grand staircase as the lady approached the door of her chamber, and the boy looked into the highbred face and read there a story which it is only given to a few to read—the story of a life's sorrow, of a mighty struggle, of a victory over evil of a high and holy purpose which would henceforth make the life of Lady Anerly more eloquent of good, more full of high teaching for those who studied it, than a hundred sermons preached by word of mouth.

This youth was an artist; he was not more than sixteen, but his spirit might have lived in other ages before there were such institutions as German gambling-houses. His soul was akin to the souls of the great painters who made Italy famous in the bygone centuries. He was only a boy and poor, but gifted with the royal gifts of sympathy and imagination. He read a romance, a tragedy, an inspired poem, in that lady's face.

She went into her room and closed her door. "She has terrible sorrow and she is bearing it bravely; she is like a sainted martyr. Ah! if I could paint her as she swept along. She suffers now as much as those maidens—those Christian maidens—whom the heathen emperors of old Rome condemned to the stake, and who died with heavenly light shining in their eyes. I wonder what her grief is? and who she is?"

The lad was himself beautiful with an uncommon beauty.

He was tall and slender, with blue eyes luminous and large; his complexion was too delicately fair for a boy, and the features of classic regularity would have made the face

effeminate had not the firmness of the mouth, the breadth of the brow, spoken of an heroic nature and a masculine will.

This boy was only recently an orphan; his mother had died of consumption in mean lodgings, in a mean street, in a mean quarter of London, about three months before we find him leaning on the balustrade of the grand staircase in the German hotel.

Martin Vaughan was then a pupil teacher in a private school, and he supported his mother out of his scanty pay. One of the masters at the school where he taught, recognising the boy's genius for painting, introduced him, after his mother's death, to the notice of John Holdsworth, a painter of renown, to whose studio flock numbers of art aspirants.

Holdsworth was on the point of travelling through the Rhine cities. He took a fancy to the gifted lad, and invited him to accompany him on his travels.

The boy leaped at the offer. He was a useful lad to his patron, whose liking for him increased as time went on. This boy will play no mean part in the strange story which we have to tell. He was one of those instruments for bringing about strange results which are chosen so mysteriously by "The Providence which shapes our ends."

"Mr. Holdsworth would like to see that lady," Martin said to himself. "I wonder if we shall have another chance. She is better than beautiful, she is grand."

Meanwhile poor Grace Lady Anerly walked on smiling faintly through the two rooms, the dining-room and drawing-room, which led to her own sleeping chamber. This room had been like the others, fitted up a season before for a royal princess on her bridal tour.

It was incongruous that grief such as was tearing at the heart of Grace should find a dwelling place in that charming room. The walls were panelled in dove-coloured, figured satin, with golden frames of graceful designs; the furniture was all of satin of the same hue, with gilded frames to the chairs.

The velvet pile carpet was a wondrous assemblage of beautifully harmonised tints; the bedstead was of carved ivory and gold; the large swing mirror framed in gold was fastened to a toilette table of ivory inlaid with gold; the wardrobe was of the same; the ceiling was painted after Watteau, and represented a fête champêtre in the days of the graceful, luxurious, wicked old Régime.

Lady Anerly sank into one of the soft satin chairs, covered her eyes with her hands, and longed for the relief of tears. Alas! this boon was denied her. It seemed that the fountain of her tears was dried up; that her young, womanly heart was withered within her. For a time the old feelings swept in upon this forsaken soul, and assailed it like a legion of fiends.

Let no one think that because Lady Anerly had yielded to holy feelings instead of furious ones, and had walked along from the hotel gardens to her splendid chamber feeling like a saint and a martyr, that these high-flown inspirations are given to suffering man or woman at once and for ever. No; many and bitter must be the conflicts in that stricken soul, and sometimes the evil angels triumph and sometimes the good ones.

"Oh, I wish I was dead," said Grace, aloud; "gone—dead and gone!"

Now Lady Anerly was one of those few dames of title who win the genuine love of their servants and their dependents. Her coachmen and footmen would have defended her with their lives; her maids—those of them who had any good feeling—loved, as it were, the ground she walked on.

She had the pride of her class, but it was a very gentle and reserved pride, not of the kind which strikes at the feelings of another. Grace had with her now at the Hotel Violetta, an English, or rather Welsh, maid called Janet, who came from one of the schools of the dowager countess on her estate in Wales.

Janet was fair and pretty and superior, well read and sensible and gentle. She had played

with Lady Grace in her nursery when she was a child; her father was still head gardener to the dowager; her mother had been wet nurse to Grace.

Janet was not a proficient hairdresser, and could only speak a little French, but her mistress would not have parted with her for the world in exchange for the cleverest French maid that ever was hired now. Janet was in an inner room putting some embroidery upon the cuff of Lady Anerly's night-dress, when she heard her mistress enter the dove-coloured chamber, and then soon she heard her utter that wild, sad, wicked wish, that she was dead, dead, dead! She hurried away the work and hastened into the room.

"My dear lady, are you ill?"

Lady Anerly looked up from her hands which had covered her face, and Janet started when she saw how ghastly she was.

"Oh! my sweet Lady Grace, let me bring you wine or salvolatile, or tell me what? Please do, Lady Grace? I don't know what to do, I am so stupid when I am afraid."

"Dear, good Janet, calm yourself. Give me your hand, Janet, it is a nice white, little, soft hand. I knew another hand which is beautiful—a strong, white, masculine hand, which clasped mine this morning, and a voice said, 'Good-bye, Grace, I am going to Mayence till evening. I shan't see you, darling, till dinner.' Then he went away. I have lived a hundred years since then, Janet!"

"Oh, my lady, what do you mean? Has anything happened to my lord? Is he ill?"

"He is well, Janet, and happy—oh, so happy. I suppose the good deserve happiness, and I am not good; I have been selfish and idle and useless all my days, so now I am punished. Janet, it is true, I do wish that I was dead! But to kill myself would be wicked!"

She arose and began to pace the chamber wildly.

"So, dear Janet, put out of my reach razors and lancet and salvolatile, for if I took a wineglassful raw of that, I should die—in agony, so look up all things, Janet, and watch me—watch me, good girl. When I walk out follow me; when I take paths through the solitary woods near the river watch me, and come behind me and lay hold of me if you find that I look too long and too earnestly at the river; lay hold of me and remind me that I should not find peace beneath those placid waters, but struggles and anguish and then oblivion, and then a terrible awakening before a righteous judge: You have been taught all that in your Sunday School, my Janet, but people like myself are apt to forget these things when they are wild with sorrow and pain, so do you remind me of them, will you?"

"But, my lady, what has happened?"

"Janet, it is one of those things that a wife should keep in her own heart, and suffer and be still, but I am weak and human, and I fear if I have no friendly ear into which to pour my griefs, no kind breast on which to lean; if I hear no words of pity and of comfort, I shall perhaps become mad! This is too much to bear alone at first; the anguish is too new; it is like a frightful fall which has dislocated all my joints. By-and-bye, perhaps, the great physician Time will set them and heal some of my wounds with his balm, but how long first? Oh, Janet, all the hopes of my youth have been crushed in one blow!"

Then the sublime salve of tears was granted all at once, and Grace wept freely, leaning on the breast of Janet.

"Janet, I must tell you," she said at length to the girl, "but you must guard my secret as if it was untold gold!"

And then she related to Janet word for word of the conversation she had overheard between Lord Anerly and the woman Laurette.

"She must be an infamous wretch!" said Janet, thoughtfully. "Who can she be? I wonder? Not," she paused for a moment, "not the Miss Chantry that was the governess at Penrythan, and that all the talk was about?"

"What talk?" asked Lady Anerly, with a

puzzled look in her grief sunken eyes. "I remember Miss Chantry. Very beautiful, dark eyed, and with something sombre and sad in her beauty. She was not a cruel woman; she could not have laughed, Janet, as that woman in the hotel gardens laughed, I am positive she could not." Then Alfred called her Laurette; Miss Chantry's name was Edith. I have seen her several times, but I only spoke to her once; she was gone before Alfred came back from Canada. Why should there have been any talk about her; she never saw him?"

"It was kept from your ears, dear Lady Grace, but there was talk about her?"

"I remember, of course," said Grace. "How selfish and wrapt up in my own happiness I must have been that I did not listen to a tale of sorrow so near to my own doors as that. Alfred came home—Alfred, whom I had dreamed of from childhood. In less than a week after his return he had asked me to be his wife, and I was so frantic with joy that all the affairs of others seemed dwindled into nothingness in my sight. I do now remember hearing that the pretty governess of Penrythan had left in disgrace, and had been confined at Glanvallon Farm, and had walked out one night in her fever and delirium and had drowned her baby in the sea. I never paid very much attention to the story. Ah! how selfish I was. I just said, 'Poor creature, what a pity she was led into wrong. I hope she has some friends who will be kind to her.' And then, selfish wretch that I was, I forgot all about her. Now, Janet, sorrow is come home to my heart; tell me, did they connect that poor creature's name with Alfred's?"

"Oh, yes, Lady Grace, I may as well tell you all I heard; I heard it from the housekeeper at the Castle. Miss Chantry is the daughter of a poor curate in Surrey. She was left an orphan at fifteen and went then to the clergy daughter school in the County of Cumberland. There she remained until she obtained a situation as governess in a lawyer's family at Carlisle. Lord Anerly was captain in the 10th—quartered there, and he with other officers visited at Lawyer Maybury's, and he and Miss Chantry fell in love. He said he would marry her, so she gave notice to Mrs. Maybury that she was going to visit friends in London for some months. Now Mrs. Maybury was sorry to lose her, but gave her good certificates for her talents, and, goodness, then she went away; but only to Penrythan, and she took a lodging and then met Lord Anerly at the church of St. Ann, in Yanwath Village, near Ulsmere Lake, and a 'college friend of his,' she said, 'married them—the Rev. Samuel Diplock.'

"I know him very well," said Grace Lady Anerly, smiling a brave smile. "Then do you mean, Janet, that I?"—she gasped for breath—"am not Lady Anerly after all?"

"No, my dear lady, you are his wife; but it was not Mr. Diplock who married them at all, but an impostor, whom my lord persuaded to play parson, and they cut the last out of the book, and thus there is not an atom of proof of that marriage; it was a trick. Lady Penrythan and all the servants knew of it, for the young person made such a fuss, and so did the Doctor Phillips of Penglaron; but it was kept from you. I know Lord Anerly was in a dreadful way lost it should come to your ears. He is thoroughly tired and sick of that young person. She is no rival of yours, dear Lady Grace."

"Oh! the perfidy! Oh! the cruelty! A man, Janet, a man who could act like that can have no love in his heart for any mortal, and yet, Janet, I believe that if I had known it all I should have been mad and weak enough to have married him, still, for oh! I loved him to such distraction, and I should have said, 'He deceived that poor silly girl; but he loves me.' But now, Janet, I know that he does not love me. His love is all for the woman called Laurette."

"His love; oh, no, my dear lady, this is only some creature whom he knew when he was sowing his wild oats. His love is for you, his lady wife."

"No, let me not flatter myself that he has anything for me but contempt. I will not tell

you all the cruel words he spoke, but I know that this woman Laurette is his love, the ideal of his soul. I heard tones in his voice when he spoke to her that he has never used to me. Oh, Janet, this grief is so strange and wild. Oh! what shall I do? I must lead a life for the good of others; I must devote my time and my money to holy charity. Since Heaven has mingled my drink with weeping, let me sweeten the cup of sorrow which others have to drink, if only I am able."

"Dearest lady, you were always more like an angel than a woman," said Janet. "Now, let me bring you wine. Hark! I hear my lord's step in the dining-room. Dry your eyes."

"They are dry," said Grace. "Leave us, Janet. Leave me alone—alone with my husband!"

CHAPTER XII.

A TRUE HEROINE.

A woman passing fair, with cruel eyes,
Blue brilliant, as the glorious summer skies,
And lips ripe red that ever speak smooth lies.

It is one of the most difficult tasks that a human being can set him or herself, that of acting with calmness and gentle patience under provocation deadly as this which Lord Anerly inflicted upon his adoring wife. Patience, such patience as the nerved herself now to practice, is a virtue such as angels might glory in. To look with gentleness into the false face; to respond with a wife's holy reverence to the commands of her lord and master; to wait for the end in faith that one day the truant heart will return to its allegiance; and yet not a truant heart, for this heart of Alfred, Lord Anerly, had never wandered from Lady Grace; she had never possessed it.

He had married her (she felt it) because her fortune was large and his invalid father under the rule of his step-mother was a niggard towards him; he had married her for the sake of those large cheques which he was constantly drawing from her bankers. This woman Laurette was to have one of them presently—a cheque for fifteen hundred pounds.

Was Grace to hide from her husband that she knew the bitter truth?—knew of his falsehood and cruelty towards the hapless Edith?—knew that he was a "villain with a smiling cheek?"

"A goodly apple rotten at the core," Alas! how hard the task; but Grace had within her the elements of a true heroine. As yet she was only learning the alphabet of this divine science of heroism with stammering lips, but she was learning it nevertheless. She crushed down the wild pain at her heart, and she smiled into her husband's dark, handsome face. He bent down and kissed her lightly on the brow. He cared so little for his sweet, grave wife that he never noticed that she received the caress with a certain apathy that was not her wont.

"I want the cheque-book, Grace; some comfounded tailor fellow has written for his bill to be paid, and a jeweller for some diamonds I gave to a naughty actress when I was a naughty, extravagant boy. I am ashamed of drawing on you, love, but when Penrythan is mine I will repay you with interest. The stinginess of the pater is terrible, but a step-mother is a comfounded institution."

He walked lightly across the room, and opened an ivory desk which lay on an inlaid table, and he took out his wife's cheque-book, extracted a leaf and wrote and signed a cheque, whistling all the while an air from "La Sonnambula."

Lady Anerly sat with her white hands folded listlessly in her lap. She wondered what name the woman called Laurette passed by? She knew she should see that name whatever it was written on the cheque if ever she should obtain a sight of that cheque at all; but she had no very fierce desire to find that out. Just then, whatever she did, her husband would still love that woman and regard her, Lady Grace, as the incumbent to be taken with yonder cheque-book and the great landed estates.

"And still I love him," said the wife, to her own sad heart. "I love him still."

He meanwhile went whistling and stepping gaily about the room. After he had put the cheque into his pocket-book, he went to a large vase of roses and buried his face amid their velvet leaves.

"Delicious," he said, gaily, "it's like kissing a sweet face—like kissing yours, Grace," correcting himself, hastily.

This man was really horribly unconscious and indifferent. He never noticed the wintry smile on the thin high-bred lips of his wife. He went to the gold-framed swing mirror on the ivory, inlaid table, thrust his hands through his dark hair, and contemplated the reflection of his dark beauty. He knew how wild some women had been already for his sake, and he asked himself bitterly how it was that Laurette, the only woman he had ever cared for, should not care one snap for him. He was thinking so much of this that he never noticed that Grace had been weeping, nor that there was any change in her young face. All at once he turned to her.

"I have arranged for us to dine here at the table d'hôte to-day, Grace; there are numbers of nice fellows here, Germans and French. When one is abroad, hang it, one does not want to be for ever meeting John Bull and his wife and daughters; one has really enough of Mr. and Mrs. Bull in smoky London, not to speak of country houses, so I have resolved to avoid him and his connections as much as possible while we are on our travels; but just now there is a very slight Bull element in the Hotel Violette, only a Birmingham manufacturer and his wife and two sons, decent, civil, and loads of money. All the chief part of the locataires are Prussians and Italians, Russians and lively Frenchmen, so that I think it would be rather jolly to dine with the party this evening, and the cookery and the wines are really excellent. So will you don a gay costume, darling, and make yourself look as charming as possible? I must hurry away, for I have been about in the dust, and I want a bath and a complete change of under-clothing. No dust like this continental dust for penetrating. Will you ring for Lewis, love? The bell is close to you on that table."

Lady Anerly listlessly obeyed. Lewis was a valet who had accompanied Lord Anerly on his travels. He was a slight, short, dark, good-looking, but cunning-eyed person. He had lived with Lord Anerly now for seven years. He had been cognisant of the marriage in the village of Yanwath, although he had not been present on the occasion; and while Lord Anerly and his bride Edith had been in Edinburgh spending their honeymoon, he had been with them acting in the capacity of valet to Mr. Vincent, as Lord Anerly called himself at that time.

Lady Anerly was not by nature a suspicious person, but she always had a vague, instinctive, shapeless dislike and distrust of her husband's valet. When Lewis appeared in answer to the summons she looked up at him with a new curiosity. He knew of that cruel marriage, as she rightly guessed. Probably he knew also of Laurette—who she was and where his master had met her first. Yes, yonder cunning-eyed man was in all human probability a trader in his master's dark and discreditable secrets—knew that Lord Anerly had married her, Lady Grace Biddulph, for her fortune, and that was the reason why she had at times found the fellow's eyes fixed on her with such a cunning leer as made her blood run, positively and without any figure of speech, cold in her veins; a man with the softest voice, the most modest and respectful manner in the world.

He followed his unconscious master from the room (Lord Anerly was quite unconscious that Grace knew of one dark spot in his past), and Lady Anerly was left alone. She summoned Janet, and began forthwith to converse on the subject of the dress she should wear at dinner. He, her husband, had told her to try and make herself look as charming as possible, and not in mockery. Instinct, which never fails in these cases, told her that.

"Lord Anerly wishes me to look my best and to dine at this table d'hôte," she said to Janet,

"so make the best you can of my poor face, Janet. I have no beauty, not half so much as you, but I would fain not seem too ugly to-night."

"You have the sweetest face under the sun, my lady," said Janet.

"Because you love me, child, and until this morning I thought that Alfred loved me; but no, I must never think that again."

Janet wondered much at the angelic sweetness of her mistress. When she told her to leave her and her husband alone Janet had expected a stormy scene with raised voices.

"In her place I would fly at that woman Laurette and tear her hair from her head," said Janet to herself. But here was Lady Anerly, "like Patience on a monument smiling at grief." "I will find out that wretch and do her an ill turn if my lady does not," added Janet.

When Lady Anerly had washed away the traces of her tears, and her hair was arranged, and she was dressed for the dinner in an exquisitely-fitting toilet of white silken sheen, trimmed with old lace; when Janet had clasped a necklace of rare and lovely turquoises and diamonds round her long, slender, white throat, and a spray of real forget-me-nots at her breast, she pronounced her mistress "perfect."

"You are like a princess in a poem, Lady Grace."

Janet had always called her Lady Grace, from childhood, and when alone with her mistress, still addressed her by the familiar title. Lady Anerly was tall and slight and graceful, with a most aristocratic bearing, and a thin, high-bred face, a high nose, thin lips, a face well shaped, blue eyes, full of love and kindness, very beautiful teeth; she was a little freckled, and her hair was of that light yellow that is called sandy, but it was glossy and wavy.

It was a face you would never think of calling pretty, but as Martin, the boy artist, had said, it was "grand," for it was eloquent of intellectual power and of kindness and purity and self-forgetfulness, and so she went to the table d'hôte, leaning on the arm of her husband, to whom her lips had uttered no reproaches.

She started when she saw, sitting opposite to her at table amid the guests, a woman whom her instincts pointed out to her as Laurette; a woman very lovely—with the loveliness of Circe; a woman whose bright and totally unabashed blue eyes sought hers, and eagerly scrutinised her face.

Lady Anerly's heart of woman sank when she saw how fair her rival was; how exquisite was the blending of rose and lily in her cheeks. Her small features were all chiselled as by a Greek sculptor; her abundant golden hair, it was her whim to wear this evening flowing to her waist, to show, perhaps, that she was not indebted to the hairdresser for any portion of it. She was not so tall as Grace; she was of an enbonpoint that was only graceful at this stage; but Grace knew enough of human nature to predict that she would be stout in a very few years.

She wore sky-blue satin, and pearls, clasped with a huge diamond, were round her throat. Her dress was not modest; she had the air of a Bacchante; she was at once voluptuous and cold. If you looked for soul and thought and intellectual force in this woman's face, you looked in vain. It was the face of one who is selfish and vain and cruel and pleasure-seeking. Yet the husband of Grace loved yonder woman more than his life.

Lord Anerly sat next to Grace. She saw that Laurette watched her with the stealthy glare of a cat; she saw too that Laurette hated, instead of despising her, before the dinner was over.

"She finds I have culture and self-command and intelligence," said Lady Anerly, to herself, "and in some way she dreads me now."

After dinner the whole company strolled into the next saloon; the windows were open to the lawn; the breeze was delicious after the sultry heat of the day. Lady Anerly caught up her lace shawl, threw it over her shoulders, and passed out to the gardens. She had seen her husband leave the room; he told her he was going to play billiards. All at once she heard

a stealthy step behind her; a hand was laid on her shoulder; she turned, and there, standing under the tree by her side, stood Laurette, looking pale and refined in the moonbeams. There was a cruel sneer on her ripe, lovely lips.

"I have something to tell you, Lady Anerly," she said, "something that will make you come down from your pedestal. Oh! if you only knew. Ha! ha!"

Her cruel laugh rang out on the summer night.

(To be Continued.)

THE PINE TREE.

BEFORE your atoms came together
I was full-grown, a tower of strength,
Seen by the sailors out at sea,
With great storms measuring all my length,
Making my mighty minstrelsy,
Companion of the ancient weather.

Yours! Just as much the stars that shiver
When the frost sparkles overhead!
Call yours as soon those viewless airs
That sing in the clear vault, and tread
The clouds! Less yours than theirs—
These fish-hawks swooping round the river!
In the primeval depths, embowering
My broad boughs with my branching peers,
My gums I spilled in precious drops—
Aye, even in those elder years,
The eagle building in my tops,
Along my boughs the panther cowering.

Beneath my shade the red man slipping,
Himself a shadow, stole away;
A paler shadow follows him!
Races may go, or races stay,
The comes upon my loftiest limb
The winds will many a year be strip-
ping;

And there the hidden day be throwing
His fires, though dark the dead prime
be,
Before the bird shakes off the dew.
Ah! what songs have been sung to
me!

What songs will yet be sung, when you
Are dust upon the four winds blowing!
S. P. A.

INDISCRIMINATE KISSING.

I ALWAYS sympathise with a child who shrinks from being kissed by a stranger. Why should every attractive child become the target of kisses innumerable? A good-looking, nicely dressed child cannot be seen in an hotel, on the promenade, or in any of the parks, without incurring the habitual embrace from a number of men and women, of high and low degree. That it is an impertinence, to say the least, cannot be denied; that it is a habit which many parents deplore, and try in vain to correct, is widely known. It is most undesirable, nor is it safe, this wholesale, indiscriminate kissing. Imagine how children themselves must suffer. It is one of their wrongs that has not been sufficiently insisted on. The custom should be discontinued, and at once.

REMARKABLE ESCAPES.

THE escape from death of M. de Chateaubrun, during the Reign of Terror, was truly remarkable. He was not only condemned but actually waited his turn at the guillotine, standing sixteenth in a line of twenty. The fifteenth head had fallen, when the machine got out of order, and the five had to wait until it was

repaired. The crowd pressed forward to see what was going on; and, as it grew dark, M. Chateaubrun found himself gradually thrust into the rear of the spectators; so he wisely slipped away, and meeting a man simple enough or charitable enough to take his word that a wag had tied his hands and run off with his hat, had his hands set free, and managed to reach a safe hiding-place.

A few days later he put himself beyond the reach of the executioner. Another remarkable escape was that of two women, mother and daughter, who, travelling over a lonely road in a hired conveyance, were attacked by their driver, who, pulling up in a lonely spot, demanded their jewellery; and upon their demurring, tied the pair to the vehicle and seized the trinkets. Then bethinking himself that dead women could tell no tales, the ruffian drew out his knife; but, slipping from his grasp, it fell into a ditch. He plunged his hand in the water to recover the knife; and as he clutched it, a black snake fixed its fangs in the would-be murderer's hand. He succumbed to the poison, and in ten minutes was past hurting anybody. The women were discovered by some villagers, and released; but the corpse of the driver was left alone until the police arrived on the scene, and did official duty.

MILK.

MILK can be taken at all times as an article of diet, without any injury to the stomach. Even invalids may take it with the greatest possible advantage. New milk, we do not hesitate to say, may be taken, as far as distance is concerned, in any and every condition. Perhaps it will require the addition of lime water, if marked acidity of the stomach is present; and perhaps a little gentian may be requisite to stimulate the stomach somewhat; and it may be necessary to give it in small quantities and repeat it often; but ice-cold milk can be put into a very irritable stomach if given in small quantities and at short intervals, with the happiest effects.

Cold water, even ice cold, can also be given to patients. Tea, also, when made very weak—just strong enough to give a flavour—well supplied with milk, and perhaps a little sugar, gives the patient a trifle of nourishment in a very palatable form. The theories of our fathers on this point have long since exploded.

RETIRING FROM BUSINESS.

THERE is scarcely a more wretched class of men than those who, after spending years in active business, go into retirement in the prime of life. They become drones, of very little use to themselves or to others. There is now and then among such men a student, whose intellectual pursuits afford him an inexhaustible spring of enjoyment. But, as a general thing, long addiction to the close pursuit of business disqualifies one for anything else, and retired business men are, consequently, without any occupation worthy of the name, and seem, ridiculously enough, to be standing around and just waiting for their time to come to die; which, we have no doubt, comes much sooner than it would if their minds were diverted by some useful pursuit.

Life is short, at best, if all of it is occupied; but to sit down in idleness in one's prime, is like destroying half our days. Rest and rust are synonymous terms. Industry is indispensable to happiness at whatever stage of our existence; and to retire out of one's accustomed occupation is to retire into misery, as many a man has found to his lasting sorrow.

PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR, with his brother, will leave the "Britannia" at Midsummer, having completed the term of two years.



[THE CONSCIENCE OF AN EVIL DOER.]

FRANK BERTRAM'S WIFE;

OR,

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"That Young Person," "Why She Forsook Him," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XLV.

A CONFIDENCE.

If the heart of man is depress'd with cares
The mist is dispell'd when a woman appears.

THAT same Sunday in the twilight, just before the family assembled for dinner, Beatrice heard the knock she had learnt to know so well.

"Come in," she said, gently and Adela Langton entered; she went straight up to Mrs. Franks and took her two hands:

"I am so happy I felt I must come and tell you, and yet it seems selfish to worry you with my joy when you have so much sorrow."

Beatrice kissed her, she had only known her a fortnight, but it seemed her natural answer.

"I think I can guess," she said, cheerfully, "and I am sure you and Dr. Naylor will be very happy?"

"How did you guess—has he been to tell you?"

"No, I seemed to see it in your face."

"He only told me to-day. Oh! Beatrice—(she was allowed to use that name by special favour)—I never dreamed he cared for me, and I have loved him all my life."

There was a bright pink colour in her cheeks, she looked almost pretty. Beatrice

felt glad Dr. Naylor should have so sweet a companion.

"You will be happier so; the love that is the growth of years is more lasting than that which springs up in a few brief weeks."

She was thinking of her husband's love for her; how fierce and strong it had seemed, and yet at the first trial it had disappeared.

"Had you known Mr. Franks all your life, Beatrice?"

"You must not take me for an example," said the other, gravely. "I met my husband in June and we were married in November, after only three weeks' engagement, but we were happy—oh, so happy?"

"Forgive me for bringing back your troubles."

"There is nothing to forgive. When shall you be married, Adela?"

"Very soon, before Christmas, I fancy. Hugh says there is nothing to wait for."

"And will you live in Islington?"

"To be sure; do you think Hugh means to neglect his work just because he is going to marry me?"

"What does Lady Menteith say?"

"Poor auntie! her one sentiment is surprise; I really think if I had told her I was going to marry Brown the coachman she could not have been more astonished. Mrs. Bertram was icy cold; I think she fancies I was an old maid who ought not to think of being married at all; Frank was very kind."

"He is a friend of both, is he not?"

"Yes, of Hugh's and mine; he is five years younger than Hugh! there are twelve years between my darling and me. Do you think it too much, Beatrice?"

"No."

"Would you mind about it?"

"My husband was twelve years older than I?"

"Then he must have been just as old as Mr. Bertram—thirty-seven."

"Yes; there is the bell for dinner."

Miss Langton hastened away. Downstairs there was just a little constraint, caused mainly by Mrs. Bertram, who believed both her son and her hostess had been playing her false. Why did Lady Menteith listen to her little plans for Frank and Adela so amiably; why did Frank pay Miss Langton more attention than she had ever seen him show a girl before, if all the time Dr. Naylor was to marry her? So Mrs. Bertram was not quite cordial, and Lady Menteith felt dimly afraid she had offended her and was therefore ill at ease; but the other three seemed to have banished care.

Mrs. Bertram and her son took leave of their friends the next day, and the same afternoon Dr. Naylor returned to Islington; but first it was settled there should be a very grand wedding at Grant's Rest early in December, and Miss Langton should remain with her aunt till then, Lady Menteith announcing her attention of taking the bride elect to town for at least a fortnight to select the trousseau.

Of course Adela's parents were written to, but as ever since her second widowhood they had paid the most humble court to Lady Menteith, there was little prospect of their opposing what she approved; besides, at thirty Adela was hardly to be ruled and coerced like a girl in her teens, and as she had told Dr. Naylor in reference to the sisterhood scheme, her mother had so many daughters she could afford to lose one.

When the visitors were gone and the quiet home life began again Beatrice insensibly flagged; those stolen glimpses of her husband had re-opened the wound never truly closed. To live within a walk of him and not see him, to hear others talk of him as a valued friend, and to have to speak his name as a stranger's told upon her. In the old days before her accident, she had been so incessantly occupied that she had had no time to brood over her sorrow, now in an easeful, luxurious home, treated as a friend and equal by Lady Menteith and her niece, the aching grief was ever present.

She had no disease, no bodily ailment; she

played and sang, she read aloud and wrote letters; she walked and drove; she gave her best advice on the many little matters which occupied Adela, and all the while she grew paler and thinner; all the while her sorrow was over in her thoughts; she seemed gradually fading away.

Lady Mentaith was not a quick observer, but engrossed though she was in her own affairs, Adela noticed the change. She spoke to Beatrice more than once, begging her to see a doctor, and then when the widow persisted in calling herself "quite well," Miss Langton appealed to her betrothed.

"I wish you would come and see Mrs. Franks," wrote Adela in one of her letters; "she will not admit that she is ill, but I think there must be something seriously wrong; she looks like one that's pining away."

Hugh answered promptly:

"I would come as once, Adela, but you can't do more than I; the malady is of the mind, not the body; I thought so when I attended her in the accident, I am sure of it now. Mrs. Franks has some trouble which presses heavily on her. I cannot tell you more."

Adela Langton admitted he was right, a mystery did hang over the pale, beautiful widow, but she had not the courage to raise the veil which Beatrice had hung over her sorrow; she could only give silent sympathy, and trust to time to heal her friend's wound.

Frank Bertram had been to see her since she gave him her "recipe," and once again her aunt had been out and she had received him alone.

"Miss Langton, I have come to tell you that I am going to exert myself at last."

"I am very glad to hear it, and how?"

"I have been to see a friend of mine who holds office under the present Government and told him of my intention to study diplomacy; it's beginning rather late in life—seven-and-thirty—but I believe it's the only profession I've the least taste for, and he thinks in a few months he can get me a good post abroad. From now till then I shall give all my time to preparing myself for the work, and if an under-attachehip is not a very brilliant position it certainly will be better than doing nothing."

"And your home—your duties there?"

"Don't reproach me for following your own advice. I went to see Hugh, and told him of my plans. I made him promise to look out for some pet patient of his—a gentleman with plenty of children and little means, you know—to come down and act as my steward; there's a pretty little house close to the Knoll they could have, and if the wife's good-natured she'll see after my mother. So, you see, someone will be benefited by my absence."

"And when shall you come back?"

"When there is a chance of disputing the county. I mean to and my days as M.P. for Downshire. There Miss Langton, please admire your work. Don't you think you have transformed me into a very respectable member of society?"

"And I hope a happy one."

"Ah, well, happiness is a plant of slow growth. Hugh invited me to the wedding. I told him he was outraging all etiquette, for the bridegroom had no right to invite a soul."

"Nevertheless, please come. We shall both like to see you."

"Poor Lady Mentaith. How excited she will be. She has a double share of exertion, being related to both sides."

Adela laughed, and blushed as though she had been eighteen instead of thirty.

"Poor auntie! Her one trouble is that we are to live at Islington. She looks on that as a dreadful hardship, and declares no one will ever visit us."

"I will, for one."

"And Mrs. Franks has promised for another, so there are two volunteers."

"And more will follow."

"What does Mrs. Bertram say to your plans?"

"I am afraid she would not be pleased if she knew I had had a hand in them."

"I am afraid not. I have put off telling my

mother till the last moment. She will not take the news very kindly, I fear. Her ideas of usefulness are confined to Downshire. She won't recognise that any other place is right for me to be in."

"I have not seen her for some time."

"Miss Langton," said Frank, disregarding her last remark, and leaning half forward in his earnestness, "in a few months I shall probably be far enough away. Will you do me a favour?"

"To be sure."

"It will seem a strange request to you. You will wonder at my making it so soon, but I may not see you alone again for months, and my request is a secret."

"A secret from everyone?"

"Tell Hugh, by all means. Heaven forbid I should ask you to keep anything from him. When I said a secret I meant from the people here."

"I understand."

He was so long in speaking that after a time she added:

"Indeed you may trust me."

"I am sure of that—Do you read the newspapers, Miss Langton?"

"Yes."

"And do you ever go to the theatre?"

"Oh, yes, I have often been. I don't suppose, simply, "I shall go so much now."

"Do you remember an actress called Beatrice Grey?"

"Perfectly. She was the heroine of 'Mona Grème.' She retired from the stage soon after."

"Miss Langton, whatever seems strange in what I am going to say forgive. Miss Grey and I were friends—lovers—and we were separated, nothing could ever bring us together again—nothing."

"Don't say that, here was such a sweet face, surely in time—"

He shook his head.

"Nothing could undo what is done; but for the old time—for the sake of the old days—I am anxious about her. I don't know where she is or what she is doing. No one does know, but I have the fixed idea that some day she will be found."

"What do you mean by found?"

"I don't know what I mean. She may return to the stage. She may be found by someone who had known her before, if she—died even of distress, it would make a stir, because only a little while ago she was famous."

"I see."

"If she is poor, I want you to help her. If she acts, I want you to let me know. Is it too much to ask?"

"I will do it for you," replied Adela, firmly, "only I fear I am not likely to hear of her."

"As likely as I."

They were silent. Adela had the key now to the secret of his depression and aimless life. He had loved and lost by something worse than death. What was the end of the romance? Had the beautiful actress married another? Had she and Frank Bertram ever been engaged, just like Adela and Hugh were now? What a sweet face Beatrice Grey had.

Suddenly, swiftly as lightning, came to Adela the memory of just such another face, only gentler and sadder. Often she had wondered of whom her aunt's companion reminded her. Well, she knew now. It was the heroine of 'Mona Grème.' Could these two be one and the same? With a start she remembered that Mrs. Franks' first name was Beatrice.

"If I find her," asked Adela of Frank Bertram, "shall I give her any message from you?"

"No," he answered, slowly; "it would be kinder not. My name could only sound as a reproach to her."

"Good-bye," for he had risen to take leave.

"Good-bye, I shall remember it."

"God bless you and Hugh. You will be very happy, Miss Langton. If there were more women in the world like you, there would be fewer aimless lives and desolate homes."

It was the morning after his visit to Adela,

and Frank Bertram sat alone over his breakfast reading his correspondence the while. His mother was away. A very warm invitation had summoned her to Blythe Hall for the christening of Charles Stuart's little daughter.

Frank was to follow in a day or two, but just now he was quite alone at the Knoll. He took up the letters one by one and read them slowly through. Few were of any importance: a business communication from his banker; a reminder from Mrs. Stuart of his promise to come to them soon; a long epistle from his mother descriptive of the charms of Muriel Elena, her small daughter, not very exciting any of these. The next was different, a short concise note in a crabbed hand, eminently characteristic of the medical profession.

"DEAR SIR,—Although personally unknown to you, I venture to write to you in the cause of humanity. One of my patients has been slowly dying for weeks, and he cannot die at peace until he has seen you. The reason for this wish, or why he will not allow me to mention his name I do not know, still if any way possible to you to come to town, I hope you will gratify the last desire of a dying man. I am, with regrets for troubling you,

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES MACKENZIE."

The name was that of a celebrated physician; the address was Harley Street. Frank read the letter again and again; it seemed perfectly genuine. He could think of no man likely to want him at his death bed. He hated scenes, and his first impulse was to write a polite refusal, but the letter sang in his ears. "Cannot die any until he has seen you," seemed written on his brain.

Perhaps this poor creature could tell him something of Beatrice; at any rate, no act of his should deny the last consolation to a fellow creature; he would go to London that very day.

Five o'clock found him in Harley Street. He sent in his card and was shown at once into the consulting-room. An elderly man soon joined him. Any doubt of the letter being genuine was at once dispelled by the grave, almost solemn bearing of the white-haired physician.

"This is very kind of you, Mr. Bertram. I hardly dared expect you to-day, and yet I feared my poor patient would not live beyond another."

"Who is he, doctor, and what can I do for him? I came at once on receiving your letter, but I can form no guess as to your patient's name."

"Percy Ashley!"

Strong man though he was, Frank Bertram turned deadly faint. He reeled and caught at a chair for support. The summons did then after all concern Beatrice.

"I have known him from a boy," went on the physician; "I know there are many blots on his character, and I feared you might be among those he has injured, and I see I was right."

Frank breathed assent.

"My brougham is waiting, shall we come—Stay, let me offer you a glass of wine."

Mr. Bertram drank it quickly; he really needed the support then. He followed the doctor slowly to the carriage like one in a trance. He felt certain he was going to hear of his wife. They did not drive far; only to a house in Wimpole Street. Bidding the coachman wait, Dr. Mackenzie alighted and knocked at the door.

"Any change?" was the question to the page who opened it.

"No, sir."

As one who knew the house and its ways, the doctor strode upstairs. He gently entered a room whose door stood open, signing to Frank to wait outside. Another moment and he returned.

"Come in. I have told him you are here."

With a dread he could not have described, Frank Bertram followed the physician. The apartment was furnished in the most sumptuous manner, and to our hero's surprise, Percy Ashley was not in bed; he lay on a sofa close to the fire covered with rugs, his face worn and

pinched by the ravages of disease, looking almost to half its natural size, and his blue eyes filled with pitiful entreaty. Frank shuddered. They had spoken of the patient as a dying man, but he had not expected to find him like that. Dr. Mackenzie administered a cordial, and then turned to Frank.

"I shall be in the next room; ring if you want me."

And he left the two who had hated each other with a mortal hatred alone together.

"Come closer," said Percy; and excitement lent a new strength to his voice, so that it sounded clear and distinct; "it is a long story, and I have not long to tell it in. It is about four years and a half ago that Beatrice Grey first came to my brother and asked him to help her to be an actress. She gave the name of Beatrice Lestrangle. Gradually she told him her history. She was the eldest child of Charles Grey, the celebrated comedian, who disappeared thirteen years before, it was believed, to escape being tried for forgery! I must tell you this to explain what comes after."

"My brother engaged Beatrice at his theatre; he advised her to be known by her own name. 'Her father's flight was so long ago,' he said, 'people had forgotten it; besides, there were many Greys in the profession.' Till then she had believed her father innocent, and that some day he would return and prove as much. My brother persuaded her he must be dead, so she became Beatrice Grey, and was confident that she was an orphan. I loved her. Don't start like that. You must have known it. I would have done anything in the world only to have married her. She refused me over and over again, and finally married you."

"I had sworn to be revenged on her, but for a long time I was powerless. I was not quite sure she had married you, and I did not know your name. At last her old companion wrote that she was your wife, and you were Frank Bertram of Downshire. Everything played into my hands. Not a creature knew of your marriage. That exasperated me more, that you should hide and be ashamed of a wife I would have given so much to win. Well, a man came to the theatre and wanted to see Miss Grey; he wouldn't believe she didn't act there any longer, and they sent him into me."

"Well, it was a man who had been Charles Grey's most intimate friend; the fellow, in fact, who really forged the papers that Grey was accused of. The two had gone to the seaside from Saturday till Monday, and the first news of the charge to be brought against Grey was in the Monday's paper. He read it, and died half an hour afterward of the shock; his heart had been affected for years."

"John Fulton, frightened for himself, for he knew if the case were inquired into his guilt must appear, had his friend buried under a false name. The inquest was held on Henry Charles, and as Henry Charles poor Grey lies buried."

"The other left the country; he had plenty of means, for by some chance Grey had with him a box containing valuables, his wife's jewels, which had been repaired, and a casket with family documents. He never moved without these things."

"Well, Mrs. Grey became Mrs. Lestrangle, and kept her husband's disgrace a secret. When this Fulton came to me, he said he wanted Miss Grey; he knew she earned a great deal of money; he meant to sell her the contents of the casket, her mother's letters, photographs of herself and sister, and other things. I bought them."

He left back exhausted, and Frank Bertram rang loudly for the doctor, fearing he should never learn the end of the story. In a few minutes the blue tinge passed away from Percy's lips. The doctor gave him some more cordial, and he resumed."

"I paid him well to represent himself as Beatrice's father. When I went down to Woodbine Cottage. Never mind how I knew she was there; you were away."

"Yes," said the doctor, "I told myself off as her friend. I told her her father had returned; that he was guilty

of the crime laid to his charge; the police were on his track, and his one chance lay in flight. If she would not help him he would proclaim to all the world that Mrs. Frank Bertram was a forger's daughter; he would beg money of you."

"I painted your pride and indignation well. I told her you would never hold up your head after such disgrace; that for your own sake she must deceive you; she must see her father once; take him fifty pounds; and receive his promise to leave England."

"The day was fixed for our visit to Filton. He was a low, drunken fellow. I couldn't let her go by herself, so I was to take her. And then I wrote to you. I told you your wife had loved me, not you; that she had renewed her friendship for me and told me of her marriage. I gave you place and time where you could see us together. You did see us. 'All I wanted was to part you.'"

"I knew you would write and reproach her for her deceit; I knew she would think you meant that other deceit to which she stooped to save you pain. I foresaw a misunderstanding which should keep you apart for years."

"You must be a fiend!" burst from Frank, "to devise such a hideous scheme."

"Don't reproach me. Remember I am doing all I can—I am making reparation. Remember too she always loved you—she despised me."

"Go on," impatiently.

"Here," taking a package from a chair near him, "is the confession of John Fulton. The man died three months ago. It is quite enough to clear Charles Grey's name."

"But my wife!—my Beatrice?"

"Yes, she is yours. You two will have happy years together while I am moulder in the grave. You have won and I have lost. Surely you can be merciful."

But Frank Bertram could not speak. Remembering the weary months he had been parted from his wife, the little chance he had of finding her, he could not bring himself to forgive.

"You are too hard," said Percy Ashley. "Heaven help poor Beatrice if you were as hard to her."

Then Frank recollected the bitter words; the cruel letter he had written to his wife—his loving, patient wife. He needed money sorely himself; could he dare to deny it to the miserable man before him?

"I forgive you," he said, gently; "it must have been an awful temptation to have loved Beatrice—and lost her."

"Thank you. Tell her, please, I'm sorry; however much I sinned against her, it was from love of her. She was the one love of my life—Beatrice."

He sank back then exhausted, and Frank again summoned the physician.

"Poor fellow, he's almost gone now, and I remember him such a fine boy. Well, we must all die, but what a wasted life his has been!"

"A wasted life?" It was the very term Adela Langton had applied to Frank's. As our hero stood there by that death-bed, in spite of the awe we all feel at the near approach of death, his heart was filled with joy; the shadow that had darkened his path was removed. Beatrice loved him; she had never loved anyone else; he would find her, and together they would begin another life."

It was a sad scene; no relation, no single friend was near the dying man. The hired nurse came up presently from the stifled sleep she had been taking after nights of watching. Dr. Mackenzie and Frank Bertram lingered on, waiting to see the end. It came about midnight, and was calm and peaceful.

After that farewell message to Beatrice, Percy never spoke again. He passed away in a kind of stupor; the same disease which had been fatal to his brother killed him, not much more than two years later. As he went away with the doctor in the chill night hours it seemed to Frank his troubles were over; he had only to find his wife; he fancied now he knew she had

always loved him. He must find her easily, and never thought of the many fruitless inquiries he had made during the last twelve months.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TOLD AT LAST.

To err is human—to forgive divine. FORG.

It was only the morning after Percy Ashley's death, on awaking from a troubled, restless sleep, that Frank Bertram realised all that had happened to him. It was no dream, but real, simple fact. The package the dying man had given him lay on the table as witness of the reality of last night's scene. Mechanically Frank took it up and untied the string that secured it. Letters in a woman's delicate handwriting fell on to the table. Their date was years before; they had probably been written by Beatrice's mother before she became Mrs. Grey, then there was a picture of two children, a baby, and a little dark-haired child, whose eyes looked like his wife's.

It came back to Frank then that Percy Ashley said his Beatrice had been called Lestrangle before she went on the stage; Charles Stuart's wife had been Miss Lestrangle. Muriel herself had told him of a sister who had left her to become an actress. Could his wife and Muriel really be so closely united?

Like a man roused from sudden sleep Frank reviewed it all. Beatrice had told him once of a little sister who died before her fame began. The mystery grew clear to Frank. Mr. Stubbs, in his pious horror of all connected with the stage, had told his eldest niece that her sister was dead. The news he learned last night would bring joy to other hearts besides his own. When he found his wife he should restore a sister to Muriel.

He went out early and directed his steps to a private inquiry office of much repute. Something told him his lost wife was hidden too completely for his unassisted efforts to discover her. He could not bring himself to advertise. Beatrice detested newspapers. He would not let her name appear in an agony column, come what might, or he thought so now.

It was rather a slack time with the great establishment, and he was fortunate enough to see the manager without any very dreadful delay. Mr. Douglas looked at the tall, aristocratic man, and wondered what his business could be. Anyhow, he looked a client who would be profitable. Frank had never felt more embarrassed.

"I believe you undertake to trace missing persons?"

"Certainly, it is quite a feature of our business. I may say we have led to the capture of more criminals than any house in England."

"But it is not a criminal."

"That doesn't matter," reassuringly. "We are equally at home in other branches. We restore heiresses to their homes, prevent elopements; in fact, our skill is equally at the service of all our clients."

Despite the desperate earnestness of the case, this phraseology struck Frank as odd. It reminded him of quack medicines warranted to cure all disorders.

"I want to trace a lady," he said, gravely, "whom I am most anxious to find."

"Queer here?" and Mr. Douglas touched his forehead significantly.

"Not at all. She left her home in consequence of some misunderstanding," he hesitated a great deal here. "I simply want her address. When you put that into my hands I am willing to pay you generously."

"I've no doubt we shall be able to call upon you to fulfil your promise, sir. May I ask for a description of the lady and all particulars?"

"It is—and here lies the difficulty—more than a year since I saw her. The man of mysteries threw up his hands."

"More than a year. The affair assumes a

very different aspect. A lady might travel to the end of the world in a year."

"Had the matter been easy I should not have required your assistance," dryly. "The question is simply this, will you help me or shall I go elsewhere?"

"We will do all in our power, sir, only success must be a more tedious matter than in an ordinary case."

"I need not urge on you the most complete secrecy."

These walls are used to hearing confidences. May I ask you to proceed, sir."

"The lady's name was Beatrice Grey. Two years ago she was leading actress at the New Theatre."

The manager's face fell.

"I am sorry, sir, we cannot help you. In any other case we should have been proud to take your instructions."

"But why not in this?"

"It would be lost time and money. A year ago a gentleman came to us with the same request. The loss was fresh then, the affair seemed easy. For six months the whole skill of our office was expended on it, and failed. We who had succeeded in the most intricate inquiries could learn nothing of the lady. Mr. Ashley was rich, and offered us liberal payments; in six months I tell you, sir, we obtained no clue to her."

"And you refuse to open the search again?"

"If we had one hope of success nothing would make us give it up, but with not a single clue to guide us it would be folly."

"Mr. Douglas, will you be frank with me? What is your opinion in the matter?"

"Opinions are not facts, sir."

"No, but they sometimes guide to facts."

The manager felt flattered.

"I don't think Miss Grey is dead, though my partner declares she must be. My idea is she won't be found, she has some notion she's being looked for, and will take a pleasure in not being found."

"That would argue she was in England."

"If she's alive she's in England, in London most likely. Somewhere close to hand if we only knew where. There's no place on earth where women can hide themselves better than London."

"What would you advise me to do?"

"There's but one thing I can advise, and that you won't like."

"What is it?"

"Wait."

"But I can't wait."

"There's a good deal comes to those that wait. The difficulty about this Miss Grey is, she had no friends, no associates, no one you possibly could imagine she'd go to. She seems to have gone her way and let other people go theirs."

"Well, I must not detain you any longer. Pray accept a consultation fee," and laying a five pound note on the table, he walked out less hopeful far than when he had entered.

Frank was in no mood to let the grass grow under his feet. After his interview with Mr. Douglas he drove to the terminus and went down by train to Blythe Hall. He got there about twelve. Mrs. Stuart and his mother had driven out to exhibit the wonderful baby to some admiring friends. Charles received his old comrade alone.

"We had no idea you were coming to-day, but you are more than welcome. I am at home alone."

"Take me into your study, Charley. I want to talk to you."

Somewhat surprised, Mr. Stuart led the way to his own sanctum; but when Frank had thrown himself into an arm-chair, he seemed in no hurry to speak.

"What on earth is the matter, Frank? your eyes are bloodshot; you look as if you had been up all night."

"I was up till two. I was at a death-bed, and it has given me an awful shock."

"Good gracious! Whose?"

"Percy Ashley's. He sent for me. I only got there just in time. He died at midnight."

"What did he want with you? You were not friends."

"We are—I mean we were bitterest enemies. I suppose he wanted to do his best to undo the injury he wrought me. I think he repented."

"My dear Frank, do you know you are talking in riddles. I have not an idea what you mean."

"My head feels queer, but I am speaking the sober truth. It will surprise you, and you will think me a scoundrel, but I can't help that."

"Go on," impatiently.

"Do you remember the time after your accident? You accused me of having something on my mind. You asked was it cards, money, or a woman?"

"I remember, and you denied all three."

"I deceived you then. My trouble was that I loved a woman and I married her."

"You married her?" in unmitigated amazement. "Frank, can you mean that you have a wife?"

Gravely, solemnly, Frank Bertram answered: "I was married two years ago. I don't know—more shame for me—if my wife is alive or dead."

Charles Stuart sat still and stared at him; he was too bewildered for words.

"My wife was beautiful, and a thousand times too good for me; but I thought people would be wondering who I had married, and my mother would look coldly on my wife, so I kept our union secret, and took my darling abroad. For some months, Charles, I think we were happier than any human beings."

"And then?"

"A misunderstanding rose up between us. I can't tell you what it was, only that my wife acted like an angel, and I was a jealous idiot. I only knew the truth last night. For fifteen weary months I have been parted from her; now the object of my life is to find her, and I want you to help me."

"You know all I can do I will, but, Frank, do you mean you have no idea where she—your wife, I mean—is now?"

"I have no idea. Oh, Charles, for the sake of our years of friendship, help me now. She has a claim on you too. She is Muriel's sister."

"Muriel's sister? Do you mean you married Beatrice Lestrangle?"

"I married Beatrice Grey. The family assumed the name of Lestrangle when the father died. Beatrice Grey, the heroine of *Mona Greme*, is Muriel's sister and my wife."

"And you have known it all these years?"

"No; only last night I learnt that Beatrice and Muriel were sisters. I can guess that Mr. Stubbs in his zeal parted them by representing to Beatrice that Muriel was dead, whilst from her he hid her sister's stage name."

"But I had no idea you cared for Beatrice; you used to speak against actresses."

"I struggled all I could against my love, but it was too strong for me. I must have married her had she been a crossing sweeper only; and this is where I blame myself—I concealed our marriage; I wanted to hide my wife until people had forgotten Beatrice Grey."

"You would have had to wait until you were white-headed."

"Ay, I am wiser now. Only help me to find her, and all the world shall know that the favourite actress is my honoured wife."

"There is Muriel," as the sound of wheels reached them. "Frank, whilst all is in such dreadful uncertainty, it will be kindest to tell her nothing."

"Then you think my wife is dead?" eagerly.

"Oh, Charles, have you no hope?"

"Until you know of her death, of course there is hope, but, Frank, my poor friend, don't buoy yourself up. To my mind there is but one explanation of the mystery that has shrouded her movements. I fear all her troubles are over, and that she will never live to be owned as your wife."

"I have done what I could already," answered Frank, doggedly. "I went this morning to Douglas's Enquiry Office, and they told

me it was worse than useless for them to undertake the search." Then getting up he said excitedly: "Charles, you must help me or I shall go mad!"

"What did Douglas advise your doing?"

"He said, 'Wait.' Charles, waiting is cruelty to me. You must suggest something."

"I should advise."

"I don't like the idea. I have always had a horror of the agony column of the newspaper. Fancy putting my darling's name there."

"You need not put her name there, Frank."

"You think it might trace her?"

"At least it is worth trying."

And so against his own instincts, Frank Bertram yielded, and a day or two afterwards the following advertisement appeared in the principal London papers:

"BEATRICE is entreated to send her address to the friend from whom she parted last year. Write to the old place. He is still seeking her."

No address was appended. Charles Stuart had suggested it, but Frank urged that this would give the clue to others, and that Beatrice would write of course to the Knoll. Despite the months of wanderings, she would remember her husband's home.

It never occurred to Frank Bertram that in his nervous dread of making his secret public he was putting far too little. As the advertisement stood, it might have been composed by anyone who had last seen Beatrice in July. The words applied perfectly to the time of her parting with Percy Ashley, and the "old place" might very well have stood for the "New Theatre."

(To be Continued.)

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

THE DRAMA.

ADELPHI THEATRE.

THE "School for Scandal" has been produced at this house, where it is to be played for some time on alternate nights with the "Hunchback." There is hardly a prominent London theatre at which Sheridan's celebrated comedy has not been performed within the last few years, and so familiar is the piece to the present generation of playgoers that a high standard of acting is required to satisfy the exigencies of the public. The cast of the present revival cannot be pronounced satisfactory. With the exception of such well-known and meritorious impersonations as the Joseph Surface of Mr. Hermann Vezin and the Charles Surface of Mr. Henry Neville, to which may perhaps be added the Lady Teazle of Miss Neilson, though this actress is not at her best in such a part, the more prominent characters are not well acted. The all-important part of Sir Peter Teazle finds a feeble, though careful, representative in Mr. Flockton, and Mrs. Alfred Mellon is ill-suited to the character of Mrs. Candour, while Crabtree and Sir Benjamin Backbite are very ineffectively played by Mr. George and Mr. Edward Compton, and Mr. Pateman, as Moses, fails to catch the accent of the stage Jew. The minor part of Careless was played with spirit by Mr. Waring; Mr. Celli sang the familiar toast-song so well as to obtain a well-merited encore, and Lady Sneerwell, Maria, and Sir Oliver were safe in the hands of Miss Bella Pateman, Miss Lydia Foote, and Mr. Horace Wigan. "Amy Robsart" is still underlined for production at this house.

ROYALTY THEATRE.

THAT entertaining comedy "Crutch and Toothpick" is attracting large audiences here, who appear heartily to enjoy the many sparkling good things with which Mr. George E. Sims has ornamented the dialogue of his amusing story. The three acts continue to be played

with great spirit and fun, thanks to Miss Lottie Venne, Miss Rose Cullen, and Messrs. Lytton Sothorn, Edgar Bruce, Charles Groves, and H. Saker. The comedy is preceded by a silly "screaming farce," by William Brough, "Trying It On," in which Mr. Lytton Sothorn gabbles through the chief part in a conventional manner, in contrast with the intelligent and highly effective style he displays in "Crutch and Toothpick." "A Will with a Vengeance," described in the bills as a "comic opera," also forms part of the programme. The story is an uninteresting one. The single scene of the opera, which is laid in Corsica, and the Italian dresses, are pretty.

SOUTH LONDON PALACE.

The holiday folks were specially entertained with a grand Hungarian Ballet, introducing the Kiralfy troupe. Mr. Harry Rickards' wardrobe is worth seeing. He chirrups in a style that affords immense satisfaction and he is repeatedly encored in his song descriptive of things social and political. Mr. Charles Williams is deservedly popular. The next comer was Duxoni, with his wonderfully trained dogs, monkeys, and goat. Their feats confirm our faith in the Darwinian theory. Pongo's Dream is an entertainment of the Negro-acrobatic order, furnished by Messrs. Sterling, Davis, and Sterling. Pongo's gymnastic skill is wonderful and the sketch is provocative of much merriment. Mr. Godfrey works hard. Great fun is furnished by the five members of the Walton family. The comic songs of Mr. Fred. Davis, and the clever gymnastic and acrobatic feats of Maldavan and Pedro, add to the attractions.

ARRANGEMENTS have been made for two grand operatic concerts at the Royal Albert Hall during the season, and the first will be on Saturday afternoon, the 28th inst. The performers will be Madame Adeline Patti and the principal artists of the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden. The orchestra (increased to 120 performers), the chorus (100 voices), and a full military band will also take part in the concert. The musical arrangements will be under the direction of Signor Vianesi and Signor Bevg-nani.

FRINGED WITH FIRE.

By the Author of "Bound to the Trawl," "The Golden Bowl," "Poor Leo," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

STORM AND FIRE.

Ah! whence you glare
That fires the arch of heaven? That dark red
smoke
Blotting the silver snow.

The snowstorm which had commenced in the morning, when Mrs. Henen paid her visit to Rookford Towers, continued almost without intermission for two whole days and nights, and the consequence was that when Lord Craysforth, in compliance with the urgent message sent him, came down to Worcestershire, he found the roads nearly impassable and the weather intensely cold.

Mental anxiety had wrought a great change in the proud peer during the last six months of his life. He had never been the same man since that summer morning when he and his son had that explanation in Wardour Park which drove all esteem and respect for his parents from the heart of the younger man, and made the father feel his own degradation more completely than he had ever done before.

Indeed, I doubt whether Lord Craysforth had considered himself a very great sinner up to this period. True he was bearing a title to which he had no right; he had voted in the House of Lords when he had no claim to be present in that august assembly.

But then, he urged, in self-justification, that the man to whom the title really belonged was mad; that he was no doubt guilty of the crime

of murder; that it would have produced much scandal, and could have been of no advantage to any human creature for the real facts and circumstances to be known, and that, as he himself was next-of-kin, and must succeed to the title and estates when his relative died, there was really no crime in his taking what came so naturally to him when that relative was morally and intellectually, if not actually, dead.

All this was very well, plausible enough and perfectly satisfactory to his own conscience—which, truth to tell, seldom troubled him much; but then there was the question of those two children.

It was his wife's fault, perhaps, that he had wronged them, for he had listened to her advice and had allowed the idea prevalent among the servants to be acted upon as though it were a fact, and the fair fame of a dead woman to be smirched, while he knew in his heart that she was as pure as the purest of her sex.

Still, even in this he had persuaded himself that he had done little or no harm. The children would be taken care of, no doubt, if they lived, and if they died in infancy what matter to them, poor little things, whether their mother had been a peeress or a beggar?

With this sophistry he had contented himself, and the years had rolled on until Mrs. Henen appeared, or, rather, re-appeared upon the scene. From the hour, however, when this woman had first exposed her purpose he had known no rest. Anything to purchase her silence had been his first thought, but when he found that, owing to his son's obstinacy, he could not pay the price demanded he felt that any hour might bring ruin and disgrace to him and his.

If that man in the tower—he had ceased even in thought to call him cousin—would but die the great danger would be over, for who would care to hunt up information about the fate of those two children? And even if the truth ever came to light, and they were found, he could easily plead that he had made a mistake, and like most other people, had had no reason to suppose that a marriage had taken place between their parents.

Such had been some of the thoughts with which the earl had tormented himself, and that had helped, within the last few months, to make his hair thin and grey, his eyes hollow, and his cheeks livid, so that in a short time he had come to look like an old and broken man.

The change had been gradual, it is true, but his wife and others had observed it, and after that night when he had fainted in the theatre medical aid had been called in, and the doctor had looked grave, had warned the patient against excitement of any kind, and had at length been induced to admit that his heart was not as strong as it might be, and though there was no sign of immediate danger, care was above all things imperative.

The earl never told his wife that the cause of his illness on that occasion was the shock he had experienced at observing the wonderful resemblance the young actress bore to the wife of his predecessor, the unhappy woman whom he had seen once or twice in her lifetime, and upon whose face he had looked as she lay dead. Nothing of this had he told to anyone; but he was thinking of it now as the carriage rolled and jolted on its weary journey through the snow to Rookford Towers.

And meanwhile, Mrs. Ford had been more restless since Mrs. Henen's revelation than she had known herself for many years past. Like a woman haunted by some terrible spectre, she wandered through the rooms and corridors of Rookford Towers.

For twenty years she had practically, and to all intents and purposes, been mistress of this mansion, and the few servants kept there had been trained by her and were accustomed to her ways, or, rather, to take no notice of them.

A wonderful appetite for such a spare, thin woman had Mrs. Ford, or, at any rate, the servants in the kitchen thought so. Not that they were really allowed to know what was consumed at her table, for the housekeeper was peculiar in all her habits, and one of her strange whims was to cook everything for herself.

Mrs. Ford kept the stores, ordered everything, and supervised all the household arrangements, and it was only by the quantity of fresh meat, game, and poultry disposed of that the cook and the other servants formed their opinion of the housekeeper's enormous appetite. Be this as it may, no servant dared to make a remark on the subject, for a cook who had once done so had been dismissed on the spot, and such an example was not likely to be forgotten.

Mrs. Ford's private rooms—those in which she really lived, cooked her food, ate it, slept, and spent most of her time—were in the west wing of the mansion, at the bottom of the west tower, and they could be entirely shut off from every other part of the building at her pleasure.

She had, besides these, an ordinary housekeeper's room in another part of the house, and a fire was always kept burning there in the winter, while fresh flowers were as regularly arranged in the vases in the summer, but Mrs. Ford was seldom to be found there unless she expected visitors.

I make these observations to show how easily the secret of the tower had been guarded. But Mrs. Ford is changed. The servants notice it; and even her poor reasonless patient feels that there is a change in the dull monotony of his life.

There are signs, too, that some visitor may be looked for. A fire has been lighted in the library for the last two days, also one of the best bedrooms has been aired, and huge logs blaze brightly on its broad hearth; but the servant whose duty it is to attend to this chamber thinks from the housekeeper's manner that it is not very likely to be wanted, and she is somewhat careless in consequence.

Mrs. Ford looks out of the window. The earth is wrapped in a white winding sheet, the shrubs and pathways are hidden; the leafless trees look like black skeletons bending beneath the weight of their white frozen burdens.

The sky is grey and gloomy, as though not half of the pitiless snow has fallen yet, and the birds are tame and hungry, losing all their fear of man in the presence of their less merciful enemy the cold.

"Will he never come?" she exclaims, impatiently, stamping her foot as she speaks. "Does he think my sending for him so much child's play? He will have a rude awakening if he is not careful, for the end is drawing nigh. I have heard that murder will out, and I am beginning to believe it. He can't last much longer; his mind is getting clearer, and then what will the reckoning be?"

Her thoughts, as she mutters these words, wander to the prisoner in the tower above her. She falls into a train of thought. The dazzling effect of the snow upon her eyes makes her close them, and she seems almost to have fallen asleep upon her watch, when the door of the room is suddenly thrown open, and the voice of a servant says:

"Yes, my lord, Mrs. Ford is here."

The woman opens her eyes with a start as the earl comes forward and gravely shakes hands with her.

"I didn't know you had arrived, my lord," she says, with a slightly flurried manner, and looking at him curiously, as though she could not altogether realise the change that had come over him.

"I suppose not. The snow deadens all sound; and you seem to have been asleep. I am both cold and hungry. I suppose you have a fire in some room ready for me?"

"Yes, in the library, my lord. You shall have something to eat immediately." And she conducted him to the room prepared and then went to give orders for his comfort, feeling all the time that her master was cold in his manner and displeased with her, and that he resented the liberty she had taken in sending for him.

Mrs. Ford was a faithful and devoted servant to the house of Chester, and would not have hesitated to make any personal sacrifice for the welfare of the family.

But she was a woman also who very well knew her own value—one who estimated at no mean figure her long years of service and what she had "given up," as she would have been pleased to term it, for the Chesters, and the earl's manner on the present occasion irritated her exceedingly.

She made no comment about it, however; but sent in soup and cutlets and wine for his refreshment, and then betook herself to her own living room, where he could seek or send for her as he chose. Evidently he preferred doing the former, for about an hour after his arrival, when somewhat thawed and refreshed, and consequently in a slightly improved frame of mind, he tapped at her door, opened it, and entered.

"So, Ford, you wanted to see me?" he said, as he walked towards the fireplace.

"Yes, my lord."

"There are no listeners, I suppose?" he asked, looking about cautiously.

"I'll close the outer door, my lord," and she did so, thus making it impossible for anyone to get near the room in which they were.

"Well," asked the earl, throwing himself into a comfortable chair, "what is it about? Something important. I should hope, to drag me down here at such a time of year and in such weather. It's at the risk of my life I am here—the risk of my life, I tell you."

"I am sorry for that, my lord," was the humble yet dignified reply; "but I don't think you would have liked me to write what I have to say to you."

"Write! Certainly not! You know I have always told you never to write."

The woman bowed her head, but seemed disinclined to begin the subject that was uppermost in her mind, till at last her master said, impatiently:

"I wish you'd begin; but wait. First give me a glass of wine and take one yourself. I know you keep a store here, put the decanter within reach. Take a seat, and then let me hear what you have to say."

The woman did as she was desired, but she looked at the earl curiously all the time. He was clearly in a strange mood—overbearing and yet familiar, very unlike his usual calm, kind, and dignified manner.

Looking at him now, as he seemed intent only on admiring the colour of the wine as he held his glass up to the light, she began to wonder how what she was going to say would be received. It was too late to hesitate, however, and not knowing how to begin she plunged headlong into the subject thus:

"His lordship," with an upward movement of the hand, "was really married."

"Nonsense!" with an expression of disdain. "If you doubt me, look there!" And she handed Lord Crayforth the copy of the marriage certificate which she had retained when Mrs. Hemm handed it to her.

The earl took the paper, read it carefully, muttered an oath between his teeth, and was about to tear it in pieces when the woman sprang forward and stopped him.

"It is but a copy," she said, while her eyes flashed with anger. "You don't destroy the proof by destroying that paper, and you make me believe by attempting it, as you will make everybody believe if you do it, that you know of this marriage all along."

Her energetic remonstrance made the earl pause, and he allowed her to take the copy of the register from his hand.

"You did know of this," she continued in an indignant tone, as she looked on the earl's face before her.

"No, I didn't know it," with hesitation. "I—I thought it possible."

"I never thought it possible," said the woman, throwing back her head with an indignant gesture, "or I would never have robbed those two poor babies of their rights. My lord's lawful children to be thrown upon strangers like nameless beggar's brats! Oh, I have never slept since I knew of it! I feel as though I should never sleep again until this cruel wrong has been undone."

"Beggars' brats are not handed to strangers with a thousand pounds each," suggested the earl, coolly.

"But earl's daughters are supposed to be brought up by their parents or relatives," retorted the woman, hotly. Then she added, putting an evident restraint upon herself:

"It's of no use talking of the past. What are we to do now that we do know that the children were lawfully born?"

The earl shrugged his shoulders as he asked: "What can we do? Do you know where they are? Have you kept up any correspondence with the people to whom you entrusted them?"

"No, none. I wished to lose them, to forget them, and to be forgotten. I gave no name, and I made the people I left each child with take an oath that they would ask no questions. I likewise told them they would never see or hear from me again, and they have not."

"And don't you think it would be just as well for the interest of all concerned that you should keep your word and let things remain as they are?" asked the earl, looking at her keenly, and thinking how much more pleasant life would be for him if she and her terrible charge in the tower above were dead and buried, so that they could trouble him no more.

"No, I do not, my lord," and Mrs. Ford drew herself up proudly, and looked at her companion fearlessly and even threateningly, as she went on:

"I never knowingly did a dirty piece of work in my life, my lord, and I'm not going to soil my hands at my time of life. What I've done for my lord upstairs I've done because I thought it would save him from greater sorrow and trouble, and the family from disgrace. And what I did at your suggestion with his children I did because I thought they had no legal right to bear his name, and were best out of the way, so that they could ask no questions. But now I know better. They must be found, and must have their rights."

"And what may their rights be?" The question was asked with a covert sneer, and it irritated the woman to say, recklessly:

"They'll have their own name and their father's private fortune, I suppose; you can scarcely want to keep that from them, and you know we are not out of the wood yet; the real earl may recover his sanity, he has shown signs of it lately, and he might elect to give himself up to the law for the sake of doing justice to his children."

"And you would help him?" asked the man, with a white, threatening face.

"I should be his servant then, not yours, Mr. Chester," was the calm reply.

The earl mastered his passion. It was nineteen years since he had been called Mr. Chester; he knew it was said now with intent; he knew it was uttered to remind him of her power, and he felt that he must submit to it.

Of his cousin ever regaining his reason he had no hope or fear; he had been mad too long for that, he thought, but this woman would have her own way about the children, and he might as well yield with a good grace as a bad one.

"You are faithful, at any rate," he said, with an effort, "and I will do as you suggest. How do you think these children are to be traced?"

"I don't know," with a gasp; "it's a long time ago; but I've got the names and addresses of the two men I gave them to."

"You have? Then let me have them, and I will set detectives to work to hunt them out. We may have no difficulty whatever; it is fortunate you kept them."

"Yes, and I have copied them out for you, my lord; here they are."

And she handed him a slip of paper, from which he read:

"Ralph Cousins, Surgeon, Guildford Street, Bloomsbury, London, and John Vere Maloney, Esq., Denmark Hill, London."

"Is that all the clue you have to the people who took the children?" he asked.

"Yes. You remember it was decided that they should be separated, so I placed one with

Maloney and the other with Cousins. The wife of each of these men was confined with a sickly child which could not live, and I stipulated in each case that the child I gave should in all respects take the place of the one that must die."

"I see; we may not have much difficulty in finding the surgeon, but the discovery of the other man is more doubtful; however, we will set to work about it at once; and now, how is he?"

And he nodded his head upwards. "Weaker in body, but clearer in mind; I think we shall have some change soon; I wish we had a doctor we could rely upon to call in; I sometimes think the responsibility is too much for me."

"Do you think it would excite him if I were to go and see him?" was the next question.

"No; he is never excited now; he spends most of his time in bed or lying down. I am going to take up his soup in a few minutes, would you like to come with me?"

"Yes."

Then the earl sat motionless watching the woman as she poured out some savoury compound from a small saucepan, and placing it in a covered dish, took a tray from a cupboard, and preparing it all as carefully and neatly as though it had been for himself, took it in her hands when it was ready, and opening a door which she unlocked, led the way up a dark and narrow winding staircase.

On the first landing she opened a door, and looked in. This apartment was furnished as a sitting-room, and behind a strong guard a fire burned brightly in the grate, the only other peculiarity about the room being that it was circular in shape, and the windows were very high up, so that even a tall man could not reach them without steps.

No one was there however, and Mrs. Ford, followed by the earl, mounted a flight higher. In a room of the same size and shape as the one beneath it, reclining on his bed, with his face turned towards the well-guarded fire, which he seemed to spend his time in watching, was the white-faced, white-haired man whom Judith Hemm had seen at the window of this very room when she came with Lord Rookford to the Towers.

However much he may have chafed at his prison walls in the years gone by, the man who had been suddenly struck down in the pride of his manhood lay there quietly enough now, with a vague look of wonder upon his face that seemed as though it had been stereotyped there.

Gazing at him, you saw that the mind was torpid or an utter blank, and after the long illness that followed his loss of reason the body had never been strong enough to assert its willfulness in any way, or give much trouble to his keepers. Thus it happened that, after her husband's death, Mrs. Ford was able to manage the captive without assistance.

He looked up now as the tray was brought in and placed on a small table by his side, and his eyes rested for an instant upon Eric Chester, but he never spoke to him. He scarcely seemed conscious that anyone besides his attendant was present, and to her he did not utter a word. He was in a silent mood to-day, and sometimes he would remain in that condition for weeks together.

The visitor went to his side, took his thin hand in his own, and spoke to him, but received no answer.

"It is imbecility, not madness," he thought, as he looked at the strange creature in the silent man's forehead. "The marvel is that he did not die at once."

Then he sighed. What a different life his own would have been—how much more enjoyment there would have been in it—if the blow that deprived this man of reason had at the same moment robbed him of life!

Finding he could make no impression upon the captive, Eric Chester walked down to Mrs. Ford's room, and there awaited her coming.

"I see no change in him," he said, when the woman joined him.

"No, he won't speak to-day," she replied; "but there is a change. I have noticed it coming on gradually for some time."

"Would you like a doctor to see him? I could get one to come without saying who he is, no doubt."

"Not yet. I will telegraph when one is needed."

"I have ordered the carriage and shall be off in another hour; but you have not told me where you got that certificate."

"From Mrs. Henen," was the reply.

"From Mrs. Henen! in dismay."

"Yes."

Then the woman described that lady's visit to the Towers and the Grange, and what occurred at the latter place.

"You are right, quite right," said the earl in a tone of relief, when Mrs. Ford had finished.

"We must find the children, and as she knows nothing about him," significantly, "we can then defy her."

"I am glad you think I did right in sending for you, my lord."

"Quite right, Ford. You are invaluable. The cold is trying, and I have not been well, which made me impatient and irritable. If you want anything for yourself or any member of your family you can let my lady know." And so the Earl of Craysforth went away from Bookford Towers to set inquiries on foot for the discovery of the twin daughters of his predecessor.

The wind had risen since Lord Craysforth had arrived at the home of his ancestors, and now that he was leaving it—he little thought for the last time—the storm was busy with the work of destruction.

In some places the wind was driving the feathery snow into deep and dangerous drifts; in others it left the roadway almost bare, and very comfortable and not altogether free from peril was the earl's solitary drive back to Worcester.

Higher and higher the tempest raged as the gloomy afternoon lost itself in the yet more gloomy evening, and still the storm grew fiercer as each hour passed on. Many a mighty bough was torn away, and many a grand old tree in the park was rooted up that night.

But the storm king had far more terrible sport in hand than any to which fallen trees could testify. A few hours after midnight, the servants were roused from sleep by a terrific crash, and before they had time to realise what had happened great clouds of smoke came whirling through the house, while the roar of angry flames, mightier and more terrible than even the roar of the tempest, told the trampling and half stupefied women and men, that their only hope of safety lay in instant flight from the burning mansion.

Out into the bitter night, clad in such scanty garments as each could first lay hands upon, they hurried, terror-stricken, gasping, stifled, and only when they had fled far out upon the lawn, did the little band of frightened servants turn to gaze at the scene of ruin and destruction they had left behind.

It was useless to think of doing anything to save the house. No provision had been made for such an accident as this, and the wind would have rendered all their efforts futile, even if every appliance of modern science had been available.

They could only stand and gaze in helpless wonderment at the wild fury of the flames. Every one of them felt, though no one spoke, that the grand old house and all it contained must perish.

All? Ay, that was the question. Was it only the house and its costly works of art that had become the prey of the all-devouring fiend, or had any human life or lives been lost?

As the question presented itself to their terrified minds, the servants looked around, counted their number, and then a cry of horror burst from the affrighted women, for Mrs. Ford was not among them.

CHARLES RENTROLL had come to Worcester at last, though not quite in the manner or in the kind of company in which he had ever expected to travel, for two guardians in blue accompanied him; his hands were fastened together with a pair of "bracelets," more substantial than ornamental, and still more unusual, on arriving at his destination his lodging was provided gratis, and he would have no hotel bill to pay.

I confess to having little or no sympathy with this man, though his life was undoubtedly in danger, and that, for a crime which he had not committed, for he was one of those pests who should be cast out of all civilised society, a man who will win a woman's heart for mere wanton vanity or for the gratification of his evil passions, and his object once gained, will leave her to face a life to which death itself would be preferable.

Only Clara Cousins' innate purity and unconscious innocence had saved her from the very worst evil that this man could have brought upon her, and therefore, though the law has no punishment for such a crime as he had meditated, and would, had it been in his power, have made complete, no one could feel very sorry to see him standing there between his two guardians, even though guiltless of the crime for which he stood charged.

He soon became conscious that public feeling was strongly against him, and he found that he stood a good chance of suffering for a crime of which he was innocent, because he could not be legally punished for another, of which all held him guilty, at least in intent.

It had been with no slight difficulty that he had been made to understand that Clara Cousins was dead, and that he was accused of having killed her.

"Oh, why didn't I go down there when I promised Florence I would do so?" he exclaimed, with a groan, "then I could have made all right. Now, even that will tell against me."

Making it all right was not such an easy matter as he imagined however, for dozens of persons came forward and swore positively they had often seen the deceased girl in his company, walking on the banks of the river, or in secluded country lanes in the summer evenings, and suspicion and evidence had grown so strong against him that even Horace Templar was more than once tempted to believe in his guilt.

Of course, being a rich man, and able to pay any amount of money for it, Rentroll had the best legal advice, and two of the most eminent barristers practising in the criminal courts undertook his defence.

On the morning when the first examination took place the court was densely crowded, and many people were shut out after vainly trying to obtain an entrance. The evidence taken before the coroner's inquest was read, and witnesses were examined. Inspector Swirke proved the arrest of the prisoner in a lonely house in Liverpool.

Rosalind Vere was called, and when she lifted her heavy veil a thrill of surprise, almost of horror, passed through the minds of Dr. Cousins and Horace Templar, for her likeness to their lost loved-one was so strong that, though they had been prepared for it, they were nevertheless terribly agitated.

Her evidence, without any desire on her part to be favourable to the prisoner, carried great weight with it, for if he had really believed her to be the murdered girl it was quite certain that he could not have known of Clara's death, still less have been the cause of it.

A very stiff cross-examination had she to undergo, but she bore it well; she had the truth to tell, as far as she knew it, and she told it, and when at length her torture was over and she left the witness-box and dropped her veil, Horace Templar breathed a sigh of relief, and his conviction that Dick Duster had been the real murderer was stronger than ever. And now a surprise awaited the court, for Dick Duster had come forward as a voluntary witness.

When his name was called he stood up with rather a jaunty air, looked about him carelessly, perhaps with a glance of triumph at young Templar and at the prisoner, and then walked into the witness-box to be sworn.

Very clean and tidy was Chatty Duster's hopeful son on this occasion, the hang-dog expression of countenance habitual to him was shaken off for the time in the excitement of what he was doing, and he looked like a respectable workman dressed in his ordinary working clothes.

Rosalind, from her seat in a corner of the court almost facing him, watched his face closely, though it would have been difficult for him to have distinguished her behind her thick Maltese lace veil, and she felt convinced, as she looked upon his face, that he knew more about this crime than the world gave him credit for. Having taken the oath, Dick Duster proceeded to tell his tale.

"On the 10th of October last I was walking to Mr. Edgecombe's cottage, and was coming along by the river, when I heard two folks talking together; one was a man and t'other was a woman. I thought I knew the woman's voice, but wasn't sure, it was so far off. They seemed to be quarrelling. As I come nearer I heard a splash. It might have been a dog jumping into the river, or it might have been the woman thrown into the water, but when I got nigh to where the folks was I didn't find nobody; but I found this."

Here he paused, and began tugging at his pocket, and at length pulled out very slowly a white pocket handkerchief, from its size evidently a gentleman's.

"And what do you make of this?" asked the counsel.

"If you'll look in the corner you'll see," was the reply.

They did so, and there, clearly and distinctly marked in ink, was the name "C. Rentroll." A thrill seemed to go through the court at this piece of evidence, the most conclusive as yet produced, and the prisoner, greatly excited, scribbled something on a piece of paper and passed it to his lawyer.

He read it, gave it to the leading barrister engaged for the defence, and there was much whispering and comparing of notes, while the counsel for the crown asked several questions of the witness as to why he did not produce it before, and what induced him to come forward now, all of which were replied to glibly enough.

Then came the cross-examination, and if ever Dick Duster had reason to quake in his shoes, and wish that he had held his tongue, it was when Mr. Mowbray Sedgworth rose to his feet, gave his black coat a preliminary tug, and in a courteous and even indolent tone began:

"You were going to the late Mr. Edgecombe's cottage on the night of the tenth of October, I think you said?"

"Yes, I was."

"Where did you start from with the intention of going there?"

"From my own house."

"Ah! And your own house is on the opposite side of the river, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And how do you usually get from your own house when you are going to Mr. Edgecombe's cottage?"

"Over the lock gates, there's a hand-rail for the safety of foot passengers."

"Ah! And you went over the lock gates on that night?"

"Yes."

"At what time did you cross the lock gates?"

Dick hesitated.

"Come, answer my question. At what time did you cross the lock gates on the night of the tenth of October? Speak up, man!"

"It must have been about half-past nine o'clock."

"Will you swear that it was half-past nine o'clock?"

"Yes, I will."

"Very well," with a glance at his junior



[THE RIGHTFUL OWNER.]

"Now, did anyone see you pass the lock gates at that time?"

"No."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite sure?"

"And what motive had you in going to the late Mr. Edgecombe's house at that hour of the night?"

"I was going for my monkey."

"Your monkey? A singular time of night to go for a monkey, wasn't it?"

"No, I didn't choose that it should stay there."

"Perhaps you will tell us how any animal of yours came to be in a gentleman's house?"

"'Twas a savage little beast, and Miss Florence and my sister, who was her servant, encouraged it, and whenever the little wretch could escape from me, it made its way to Jasmine Cottage, where it knew it would find shelter."

"And your monkey did escape that night?"

"Yes; he tried to bite me, and flew at me and tore a piece out of my shirt."

"Indeed; He tore a piece out of your shirt, did he? Was it out of the shirt you now have on?"

"No."

"What was the colour of the shirt?"

"I don't know," evidently ill at ease, and getting nervous.

"You don't know? Why, have you so many shirts that you cannot remember the colour of the one you wore on such an occasion as this?"

"I can't remember, anyhow."

"You can't? Well, perhaps I shall be able to refresh your memory later on. If you can't tell me the colour of the shirt, perhaps you can remember what part of it was torn by the monkey's teeth."

"Yes, I can; 'twas the sleeve."

"Ah! And you can't remember the colour now?"

"No, I can't!" doggedly.

"I suppose you have got the shirt at home,

haven't you, if you are not wearing it now?"

"No, I haven't."

But he could have bitten out his tongue the next moment.

"You haven't? Then you have destroyed it? Is this so?"

"I don't know anything about it, I tell you."

"Don't get excited. Was the piece of flannel that the monkey tore from your sleeve like this?" And a piece of coloured flannel was held up, the piece found in the hand of the dead girl, and the man's face turned pale, and he felt sick as he recognised it.

"No," he replied, hoarsely, "not a bit like it."

"Ah! Then there will be two of your shirts to be accounted for," and the piece of flannel was handed back to the police.

"Now, Mr. Duster," continued Mr. Mowbray Sedgworth, in a genial tone, "we will leave the question of the shirt for a time and accompany you on your walk from your own house to Jasmine Cottage. You crossed the river, you say, at half-past nine? Now, at what time did you reach Mr. Edgecombe's house?"

"I didn't reach it."

"Indeed! Then where did you go?"

"I didn't go anywhere. I walked along by the river, and I found that handkercher, and then I thought it was late, and I changed my mind, so I turned back and went home to bed."

"Ah! and you saw this handkerchief upon the grass, I suppose?"

"Yes, and I picked it up, thinking nothing about it at the time."

"Very good. And you heard voices, and yet didn't see any people?"

"That's so."

"And you heard a splash in the water?"

"Yes."

"Of course you rushed forward, and looked into the river to see if you could help to drag anybody out of the water?"

"How could I when it was pitch dark, I ain't a owl."

"You are not an owl, and yet you could see this handkerchief upon the grass; really you must have very remarkable eyesight, Mr. Duster."

"I didn't see it; I felt it?"

"You swore just now that you saw it."

"Then I made a mistake."

"And how did you feel it?"

"My foot caught in it."

"And your feet are so sensitive that through your thick boots—such boots as you have on now, I suppose—you felt this delicate white handkerchief?"

"I don't care what you call it, I picked it up near the water as I told you."

"Then you did not take it from the neck of Miss Cousins?"

"No, I didn't."

"And you didn't know it was tied there by the prisoner to keep her warm?"

"How should I. She didn't say so?"

"Who didn't say so?"

"I don't know what I am saying. No! no! forgive me! Don't come! don't come!" and the wretched man threw up his arms and seemed to beat the air in a paroxysm of terror.

Everyone looked for the cause of this wild outcry, and it was simple enough for all to understand. Rosalind Vere, oppressed with the heat, and eager to study the countenance of the witness, had thrown up her heavy veil, and he, excited and bewildered under his cross-examination, feeling he was compromising himself, yet not knowing how to get away, had let his glance wander from his tormentor and had encountered, as he believed for the moment, the pale, accusing face of his victim.

A few seconds later and he recovered himself, but the mischief had been done. Charles Rentroll was remanded—the case against him was strong as ever—but Dick Duster was likewise taken care of by the police, for from what had escaped him it was evident that he knew more of this terrible tragedy than he had as yet admitted.

(To be Continued.)



[A FITTING RIVAL.]

LORD JASPER'S SECRET; —OR— BETWEEN PALACE AND PRISON.

By the Author of "Lady Violet's Victims."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHO STOLE THE GOLD AND NOTES?

And was not this enough?
They met, they parted.

LORD JASPER turns to the little writing-table placed against the wall in the room in which he and Eustacia have met, and opening it, pens a few hasty lines to his step-mother, Lady Emmeline, and also to Mr. Prior, Mr. Codicil's partner, who manages his affairs in his absence.

What would the keen-eyed lawyer have thought had he heard the last denouement? How he would have shaken his head at this further melodrama in which the ill-fated Fitzmaurices were involved! And how he must have blamed Aaron for letting the terrible Jabez Cohen escape, little dreaming that the man who has wrought so much woe on the Fitzmaurices is that supple forger.

Mr. Codicil, playing ducks and drakes with the fifty thousand pounds which Lord Jasper has made him sole trustee to, finds speculation very much like dabbling in a small brook, which, when swallowed up in a mighty ocean, is apt to prove fatal to timid swimmers, who hesitate when they ought to be bold if they would escape destruction.

But avarice is one of age's passions, and if Mrs. Slater has collapsed, and no one is forthcoming to claim the property, why should he not amuse himself by temporary kite-flying. There are plenty of quiet gamblers as there are quiet drinkers, in whom none are interested—who

come and go like shadows—and the world knows little of their lives or actions.

Eustacia watches Lord Jasper in silence. Her set arm still aches distractingly, so that it is difficult to bear the pain without walking up and down the room.

"Do you know what has happened to me?" he asks, glancing into her averted face.

"Yes, I think I have some idea," Eustacia answers, hastily.

What has she not also endured since they last parted in April under the budding trees in Regent's Park? Fever, sickness, and solitude—these have been her portion during the poetic month of May.

"You have some idea, Eustacia? Well, it isn't a circumstance that can be altogether classed with ideas. It's a very ugly and unquestionable fact."

The half-conscious irony with which Lord Jasper generally clothes his sentences is now returning; his words are like sparks falling lighted into her soul. It seems as if night is vanishing, and that with the daylight, her love and adoration, vainly repressed and chilled, are leaping forth again from smouldering ashes. He seats himself near her in a low armchair.

"Poor little arm," he says, suddenly, rising and examining the wounded limb; "to think of those brutes running away and injuring my innocent flower. I'd sooner have shot them before they hurt you," caressingly. "Are you still in great pain?"

"I am in greater distress of mind," Eustacia says, turning so deadly pale that in the obscure shades of the room she looks whiter than ever.

Lord Jasper's eyes are gazing into hers with all the old consuming passionateness.

"And so am I. And when I used to desire something to outwit, elude, and worry me, so that existence should not be too becalmed, I thought of marriage as one of those social tortures and ironic combinations of fallacies and disappointments that might inspire me with higher and nobler artistic aims. Do you think Byron would ever have written those gloomy,

immortal and sardonic verses, if the respectable lady he married had been his first love?"

"Is it wise to mock others?" the girl asks, tremblingly.

"I wanted, maybe, to kill time, to be also under the harrow of some of the serious obligations of duty. I fancied my wife was a rare prize with those wonderful blendings of tint in that red-gold hair. I heard artists were raving about her, that she was a fashionable belle. I knew she was beautiful and accomplished, in short I had just that tepid, friendly kind of affection which I ever judged the safest chain to be enfettered with in marriage, for it never grows into anything dangerous. Well, then, this immaculate blonde, this court beauty, this radiant muse of domestic propriety and aristocratic bearing, does me the honour to marry me—because I disdained to act the part of an amateur detective in unveiling her past—while her first husband, the Count de Remolles, is alive."

"You wrong her greatly," Eustacia answers, gently, "to speak of her in that bitter way. She is to be pitied; she is the dupe of a bad man as much as you are."

And Eustacia, recalling the count and his wild, erratic life, his selfish heartlessness and caprices, resolves to befriend the hapless lady who has been kind to her to the utmost of her power.

"I am not only disgusted, but scandalised at the miserable cloud enshadowing me. The world will be a blank to me, and can a man live, Eustacia, without solace and comfort of any kind? Am I to exist without love amid the weariness of prospects that have no hope and no meaning, or accept some wretched semblance of affection paid for and bought, as money buys everything. Look me in the face, Eustacia, and tell me if I am to be saved or lost. Have you forgotten all I have said to you?"

"Yes," she answers, firmly, "your sentiments were attractive and well disguised, but such I will never accept."

He draws nearer to her, his breath fans her cheek.

"Oh, child! you who know but little of the world, and yet have suffered—I can see it in your face and read it in every tone—why should you prefer anguish to bliss? Can you only give one reading to the miserable mockery of life? Are grace and freedom, luxury and joy, not desirable, or only advantageous when encompassed by bondage?"

"This, my lord, is mere sophistry and deception!"

He smiles and rests his hand on hers.

"Are poetry and love so undesirable, Eustacia? Think of my wrecked home. I married this woman because you would not be mine."

"Are you a man, my lord, who would sacrifice a woman's heart and existence for your own selfish pleasure? Is it any tribute to my worth and honesty this temptation you are placing before me? Remember, before I have rejected dishonesty and the temptation of thriving on a falsehood."

"You are cold and cruel to me, Eustacia. I knew the first day I saw you that you would visit suffering on me."

"I have been ill, Lord Jasper, stricken with fever, and death seemed once very near at hand. I prayed for us both in the dim night hours, and when my dreams gave you to me, and I fancied myself by your side, and waking, the morning light revealed the wretched room and its poverty-stricken contents, the neglect and loneliness of my lot, I still prayed to be saved from an influence so fatal and terrible as the one you are exerting over my mind and senses."

"Do me one kindness, Eustacia, think of me, my sweet love, gently still, as Charlotte may have thought of Werther when his voice was hushed for ever, or as a weak, erring mortal sorely tried and distressed. I love you, Eustacia. You are my muse and goddess. You meet me under my roof in the first moments of my anger and disgrace. Come then, dearest, let us leave England and live only for ourselves. Let the present triumph, and be one perpetual delight. Marriage! Well, I've tried it. I have done my best to amend and keep up the pure integrity of social rights and claims, and see what a farce it has been—a grotesque, if tedious, comedy at best."

But Eustacia, nobler than he of purpose, and purified by past suffering, refuses to listen.

"I could not be so base!" she cries, shrinking aside, and thinking of Stephanie's agony. Has she not heard her despairing supplications? "I have got the strength and the will to choose right from wrong."

Every large nature hesitates thus. Its emotions have other interpretations than those which rule the narrow and mean.

There is something in her simple eloquence that restrains Lord Jasper, and his head sinks on his hands, but his words are bitter still.

"No, Eustacia, the love that halts and reasons, and offers cut-and-dried phrases, copy-book moralities and truisms, is not the immortal spark that dares all and dies. There is too much harmonious selfishness in it; it is not that wild, rhythmic music, the passion of which sends every nerve and thought trembling into rapture. You offer me phrases, and you have set up your copy-book morality as the guidance of your life. Farewell; but you will one day change."

Something quivers all over her features, and she rests her hand on his arm.

"I am poor, Lord Jasper, feeble and ignorant compared to you, but I have learnt at least that there is a love greater than the rhythmic music you speak of. It is infinite as the heavens, deep as the heart of the ocean; some day you may understand. What of the love that feeds on poisons, on despair, and must be crushed and stifled as something dangerous to the object beloved? You look on the surface—pagan and poet; you make a hobby of this new caprice, which you clothe in dreamy metaphors, while I am wrestling with a passion that is destroying me."

He has risen and drawn her to his breast. This is how Gretchen might have spoken; she will

releat by-and-bye. He is sure of this. There will come a day when Eustacia, fettered and enthralled, will kneel at his feet and talk of love and sorrow in a different fashion. He pushes back the dark, curly hair from her brow.

"Yes, I am going abroad to-night, Eustacia. I shall travel for several weeks, and try and get used to the change. I must fight against ennui and dissatisfaction again without hope from you. Remember how I shall dream of you. Every flower crimsoning in the sunlight amid Italian plains where I shall wander, will recall your image and speak to me of you, saddened and alone. What does fate throw me back on? Do you think in Paris, where I shall arrive to-morrow, there will be no temptations?"

"If you had a grand purpose in life," the girl says, blushing and hesitating, "something like the ardour that inspired the noble Crusaders, there would no longer be grief and guilt."

"I tell you I am always thinking of you."

"Oh, forget me then," she falters, looking like his good angel, ready to perish that he might be saved.

"Impossible! Every word you utter makes me see how rare and adorable you are. More than the beauty of the flesh is the incomparable loveliness of the soul. My darling, I shall never forget you wherever I may be."

Eustacia's thoughts drift to the memory of the terrible count. Is he still here—in this mansion? He, her father as she assuredly believes. Alas! had she only known the fearful truth, which he, as little as she, suspects, that Lord Jasper is her brother!

"Stay with poor Stephanie if you can, and try and comfort her; make her hear reason or she will go mad," he says, carrying her hand reverentially to his lips. "If you need money, write to me, I implore you. Hotel Windsor, Paris, and now, Heaven bless you. Good-bye!"

For the second time she has striven and conquered, but the struggle almost overpowers her feeble strength; with a shivering sob she listens to his steps on the stairs; the heavy banging to of the hall door, and blinding tears darken her vision.

She lights a candle and descends slowly below. She must see the miserable lady in the hands of the unscrupulous Evelyn. What will he say on finding her here? She opens the door of the little study, and Stephanie, still unconscious, is lying with dishevelled hair on the green velvet couch.

"I told him to have a noble purpose in life," the girl murmurs. "And shall I shrink from sacrifice too? No; this stricken lady shall never regret her trust in me. I will try and comfort her, and learn content in tender ministrations to one so sorely tried."

Stephanie is alone. Half having stolen to the garden gate, and Eustacia prays for peace and aid, as, white and sad, extinguishing the light, she kneels by her side and kisses her hand.

Meanwhile the servants are hurrying to and fro, some forming little groups, listening and talking, for their suspicions are aroused of something unusual having happened in the mansion while they were at supper over a fine sirloin of roast beef and young spring onions.

"I believe as our master's found her out in some shocking carryings on, and there'll be a divorce," the professional cook, Mrs. Edwards, is saying, folding down her neat black silk flounces. "I remember the goings on of my last misus. And lor! the quantities of sweet-breads and mutton kidneys that family used was a sin, for while you was all at supper I slips into my larder to put away my stewed pigeons, and I 'ard two or three things that fairly took my breath away, and mind, I can stand a good deal without being startled."

"Do tell us!" they all cry, wondering if their wages are secure.

"Another man was speakin', different to master—as allays talk as if he was amusin' hisself—and that Hingin' Hafis, a gurglin' in 'er throat something furrin'. Oh, my! if this mansion and those in it ain't a goin' to be spoken of in the daily papers, well, I'll never make savoury jelly again."

"Ah! chère cook," Mlle. Josephine here says, pensively (she is strangely pale and has evidently forgotten the rouge and eyebrow business), "I will take a little refreshment. It is well, is it not, to 'ave relations abroad? I 'ave 'ad die splendid news. I go to my 'ome in Auvergne; a little fortune's bin left me by a cousin. Ah! vat 'appiness!"

"Will you prefer a outlet, Ma'mselle Joseph, or a slice of corned beef?" asks cook, hospitably.

"Yes! I tak' von little outlet and some beere—your rosbif, it give me a malaise—an den I get off by die train to Paris. Miladi, giv' me notice. Oh, yes! sometime ago, and so I wish you farewell!"

"Is it a goodish bit of money you've come into, Ma'mselle Joseph?" asks cook, pouring the lady's maid out a second libation of foaming treble X.

"Oh, a little fortune, but good. I no more go out to dress die ladies' air. I can sing, oh, yes! pretty lively songs, like a bird, or a Chaumont's tickled little songs—in, ta, perrape! I go on die stage and dance vell too." Another glass, chère cook, it is excellent—Milord Jasper's ale. I tink your mistress a wicked woman; she 'ave lovare, I doubt not."

"Disgusting, Ma'mselle Joseph! Oh! I'm none of your French morality ones. Don't roll your large eyes about so neither. I say man and wife should be man and wife, don't I, Philip?" cries the virtuous Mrs. Edwards, engaged to the landlord of the "Rising Sun," "but the ways of harlots won't bear lookin' into; not that the poor and genteel are much better though. There was my last master, a retired sugar-baker, always drank milk at his meals, rose at five, but I won't say what was found under the dresser in the fish kettle."

"I tink I go now and packe my large box," Mlle. Josephine says, a little restlessly, and looking round rather vacantly, "and den I will 'ave cab and drive away. Vill you take dees little keepsake, a small brooch, chère cook, your bacon was fried ever so delicious?"

And Mlle. Josephine soon after vanishes to the regions above to complete her packing.

"She seems in a remarkable 'urry to get off," says cook, taking up the brooch; "look after the silver. There, I don't want 'er penny jewellery, indeed, Richard wouldn't like to see me a wearin' yer Palay Ryle rubbish after my gold watch and chain. Here, Sarah Hann, tossin' it to a slim young housemaid, 'here's something for you to go courtin' in with George on Sundays, and I tink I'll have another glass of ale myself."

"Thank you, Mrs. Edwards, it 'all just match my light blue costume and hat," says the delighted Sarah, who went in largely for dress on all occasions, and naturally only appraised the value of an individual by the price of his or her clothes.

Mlle. Josephine, sitting before her mirror, paler than ever, is counting over notes and gold in a little case. Is she waiting for the policeman's tap on her shoulder that she is so blanched and scared?

CHAPTER XX.

SUPPER FOR TWO.

Drink to fortune, drink to chance,
While we keep a little breath;
Drink to heavy ignorance,
Hob-and-nob with brother Death.

As Hafis glides down the garden path, leaving the count bleeding from the wound in his side, he checks the first resolve occurring to him of giving her in charge to a policeman as likely to prove highly disadvantageous to himself. He knows it is but a flesh wound; he has so skillfully parried the blow that otherwise might have been fatal, and to present himself at the nearest doctor's to have it attended to would be but the work of an hour at the most.

But the blow leaves him with sundry doubtful and hazy previsions of what the future might bring. This attack from a woman is a

new experience, and his ready rage and resentment are kindled to a flame.

Caution still is of the utmost importance to Evelyn. In it lies her only chance of safety, but he knows now there is hatred directed towards him of a totally new kind, abroad in the world; hatred, the force of which is a law to itself, and that sees retribution in the outleap of a dagger!

Hafis has calculated, with all her subtle Indian foresight and instinct, that the count would bear anything, save a public investigation; in his fears rests her security. She would like to be able to tell the world what kind of traitor this was, feigning death when he is alive, and visiting hopeless ruin on the woman he persecutes for the sake of his ill-gotten gains.

Her beloved mistress, Hafis had hoped to have returned to her with a different tale of vengeance executed and revenge gratified. So when she enters, the little study, to find Eustacia, like some compassionate angel, kneeling with sorrowful grace by Stephanie's side, her friend and saviour, as she vows to be, no matter at what cost of anguish and self denial to herself, Hafis withdraws to her own room, and throwing the dagger aside, feels that angry resistance of Fate's decrees which, however, causes her to resolve to make no farther attempt on the count's life.

Evelyn, hailing a hansom, drives to Upper Seymour Street, and after a brief consultation with an eminent surgeon, who evidently is under the delusion it is a case of attempted suicide, soon has his wound dressed and emerges from the portals of the surgeon's house very little, if anything, the worse for his attack.

His former intention of seeing his wife Stephanie is still unchanged; telling the cabman to put him down at the same corner at which he engaged him, Evelyn turns his steps towards the mansion.

And now what does he see that makes him start and bite his lips? Surely not the family ghost of the Fitzmaurices taking its nocturnal ramble; that irrational phantom which tradition declared always appeared to various members of the family on fateful occasions with sinister warning? What is the object which so arrests the count's attention that he utters a French oath and hurries forward?

Only a woman, dressed in quiet colours, with hair evidently recently dyed the colour of Stephanie's—a dainty, pecky-looking woman carrying a parcel, and with a box of abnormal dimensions by her side on the pathway, beckoning to the identical cabman (cheerfully smoking one of the count's best cigars) who had conveyed him from Seymour Street, and who is now preparing to drive off.

"Why, it's Josephine, of course—my wife's maid—and stealing away like this in the night hours looks deuced fishy. I'll have a word with her, at all events, before she leaves."

Evelyn arrives in time to prevent her flight. She stands, parcel in hand, looking right and left, and then at her boots, cheap at thirty shillings, and rather too costly even for so fine a lady's-maid's wear.

And now her eyes are raised, and watching him approach, she utters a faint cry as she recognises the man on the pathway. This is one of the Russian prince's intimate friends. She has received many guinea tips from the mercenary count, who has a knack of throwing away his money with princely largesse and ease; and when she lived at Camden Town with Mille, Rosalie, the starlet of opera bouffe—gradually ripening into a planet of first magnitude amid the astronomical celebrities of the season—the count and the Russian prince, with other kindred spirits, played "Rance" far into the small hours of the morning, and Mille, Josephine would wait upon them and bring them strong black coffee, ices, and other delicacies.

"Ah! I thought we were old friends," Evelyn says, lightly, stepping to her side.

"You are right, don't you remember the charming little supper at Myrtle Cottage, the ortolans, the lobster outlets, and the fine?

Why, of course you do; I can see it in every roll of those pellucid orbs."

Mille, Josephine's eyes open wider than ever, and then she recoils to close them gradually.

"Eh! Mon Dieu! Is it die Comte de Remolles, die lover of Ladie Fitzmaurice? A vicked ting she is too; with Milord Jasper si beau and gallant." But I must go to catch train, I am late already."

The count here politely offers to detach a refractory but handsome umbrella, which Josephine has found in a cab, from under her arm as he says:

"Whither so fast, fair lady? You choose a rather singular hour for your fitting. Come, don't go beating about the bush with me. I know what you are, you little French vixen. What's your game?"

Mille, Josephine endeavours to wither him with a frosty sneer, and the corners of her dainty nostrils curl spitefully, but her venomous coldness has not the slightest effect on Evelyn. Mille, Josephine essays to cross over the road, and clasps the erratic umbrella closer and with vindictive violence.

"No, don't be nasty to me, my dear," he says, quietly, "because it won't pay. Be civil, and answer my questions with the urbane suavity of your race."

But this frivolous coquette is not disposed to trifle with the passing minutes; she tries to push past that impenetrable barrier, the count, and to do him justice, he detains her more from a matter of necessity than inclination. Evelyn eared little for mean intrigues; princesses, poetesses, women who were original, naive, and had what he called de l'imprevu; were to his taste; the schemes, inductions, and calculations of the chass of Josephine presented no feature of interest to him whatever.

"I must have cab," she says, quickly; "why for do you stop me? Go to your sweet heart in dare; old, she expect you, I doubt not."

"Do you know I've taken it into my head that you don't go over to Paris to-night?" Evelyn says, quietly, and laughing a little under his breath; "that on the contrary I've a fancy for keeping you in England a little while longer."

The vanity of the woman blinds her to all sense of the ridiculous; the count can only have one object in wishing to detain her; he may intend making her an offer of his hand. Has not her bosom friend, Madame Rondeletia, won the heart of her master entirely through the media of light pastry and exquisitely boiled asparagus, so that from scrubbing out a larder, she at last arrived at the honour of receiving his friends in the salon, and why should not she, twenty times more gentle and fascinating, aspire to?

"Ah! you spoke of marriage once to me, M. le Comte," she says, simpering and bridling by his side; she does not perceive he shakes his head and smiles: "and den if I were reche I sing my prettis songs and dance ven evare I like."

But the pallor of her face is now more settled, and as he tightens the pressure on her arm she almost sobs aloud from mingled vexation and terror.

"Marry you? I've done a good many foolish things in my time, but I shall never voluntarily tie a mill-stone round my neck so long as I am in my senses. The spirit of love cannot be charmed by ignorance, and you see I have sentiments and tastes; in fact, sentiment with me has ever been a luxury."

"But I've heard you say to Madame Rosalie dat a cleavate woman great bore," she says, with a miserable attempt at coquetry.

He sees the nervous contraction of her mouth, and resolves to prolong the interview.

"Suppose we stroll along for a little walk. I've something important to say to you. By the way, have you heard anything of your last mistress? You must have made something out of that place, I should think? Well, now, I'm going to talk very plain English, while you jabber onnate French. You know a small party called Aaron? No falsehoods, or you shall be tried for child murder. You see, I am speaking very plainly."

All her grandiose assumption of indifference and dignity fades at his tone; she trembles visibly.

"Oh, mercy, M. le Comte! I will do anything you wish."

"Yes! I thought you would come to your senses some time before midnight. Now, this is my position and yours. I am Lady Stephanie's lawful husband. She married Lord Jasper believing I was dead. He has left her for ever. I have been in hiding because I've done something against the law too. No, but mind not half so bad as your crime, which means hanging by the neck, my dear, like a dog, till you're strangled."

Josephine's prettily-gloved hand involuntarily steals to her throat, and to something else packed very carefully inside her blue silk stays—the stolen money. Alas! she knows her doom is more than half sealed.

"Remember the day I'm caught and taken, I will denounce you to justice. I shall always believe what Piper swore was the truth, d'ye hear? so I advise you to blind, mislead, and throw dust in the eyes of the Jew thirsting to drag me to prison."

"Ah, Mon Dieu! Yes. I fear perfectly, M. le Comte," she says, walking meekly by his side. "You need not speak so loud."

"When you were in your last place at Myrtle Cottage, my innocent daisy—I say, you're over-powered, Josey, or is it the effect of the moonlight?—a diamond bracelet of your mistress's, given to her by Prince Vourka, was lost. She fancied it was stolen from her in the green-room, or she lost it at the supper the manager of the Doric stood us at the 'Parthenon,' but I think a dashing little lady's-maid knew what became of that missing bracelet. 'What,' bringing his eyes on a level with hers, 'is your opinion?'"

"Oh, mercy, M. le Comte!" she again implores, feeling herself hopelessly in his power.

"I merely recall past events to prove I am not a man to be trifled with, and you must assist me."

"But if I am true—ah, so very faithful—dat I safe you danger, you vill let me go to me 'ome, vere my dear fater wait for me, chér M. le Comte?" imploringly, and attempting to withdraw her hand from his arm, where he holds it as in a vice.

"No, not just yet, Josey; your filial affection, admirable and natural, must be repressed for the present. I've something else to ask you, don't tremble, but collect your scattered senses."

"Oh! it is vicked! it is cruel! Die cab drove away, ah! me famly wait so long; my leetle fortune, M. le Comte, left by my cousin. I go seek it."

"What if it should be within those nice corsets, my child?" he asks, lightly. The arrow aimed at random, he knows, will often hit the bull's-eye. "While I paid my little visit to-day to my dear wife, she discovered that a robbery had taken place in the house. Excuse me, perhaps the question is impertinent, but did you seek to relieve the Countess of a thousand pounds?"

"I, M. le Comte! Mais non! I know nothing of de money! Miladi give me notice, and now I go visit me 'ome."

Evelyn laughs now preliminary to his search.

"Well, I'm not a man who ever interprets a woman's words exactly in the sense they're uttered. You will oblige me by stepping across the road and allow me to convince myself of the truth of your assertion. I don't want to be ruffianly or brutal, but I shall certainly inspect the contents of that large box by the gate, that parcel, and your pockets, before you pay your visit to the Continent."

She bends her head, and with palpitating eagerness endeavours to draw herself from his grasp.

"Don't make a scene, but give up the game," he says, reading her look of old, "because it's lost. You've got the swag, and you will have to give it all up to me. I'll stand you a supper, Josey, and do the generous, parole d'honneur; but you will return to dress miladi's hair with

all your exquisite taste, and hood-wink Aaron. You will play into my hands and assist me, or—" and he lets that small monosyllable speak for itself.

"I do tink you are not of dis world!" she cries, breathlessly, and unfastening her dress and cloak. "It is true, I took dis money; dey are all safe 'ere."

"Capital! Hand it all up," taking the small leather case from her, with an approving pat on the cheek. "Now, we'll have supper, and you shall get back in time for a comfortable night's repose."

"But 'ow vill miladi 'ear dis money is found?"

"Leave that to me," and beckoning to a cabman directs him to drive them to some quiet supper-rooms where it was possible some of his minions might be awaiting him.

As the precious pair alight, and Mdlle. Josephine retires to restore her complexion, a broken exclamation of disgust and impatience falls from Evelyn's lips.

She wishes to look attractive, for the count is a handsome man, and supper is always something; her spirits revive as she knows he too is in her power. It is to their mutual interests to be true to each other.

"How I lothe this life," he mutters, "it is mean, detestable, and base. Is it worth having at such a price? Surely it is a worse doom than all. Oh! for the divine enthusiasm, the thrills of enchanted sound; the old dramatic spirit in which my genius revelled amidst fairest images; for passion and pathos to return, instead of this accursed hiding and huckstering with menials."

Mdlle. Josephine glances over his shoulder.

"Vat shall we ordare?" she asks, hungrily.

"Don't bring us port, it is sure to be log-wood," the count says, lifting his head, and addressing an affable young waiter, who has placed a bill of the menu before Mdlle. Josephine. "Bring us some fine Burgundy, and the lady will choose the rest."

She is quite in her element; her lemon-coloured gloves are laid aside, and her hands, with their fine delicate modelling, no longer tremble.

With Gallic vivacity and verve, Mdlle. Josephine, who can always live in the present untroubled by thought, selects some expensive entrées—a chicken, the rarest vegetables, and lastly, a salad, for what would supper be to a Frenchwoman without it?

Sipping her champagne, and with a glass of untouched Burgundy by her side, she scarcely perceives he partakes of nothing.

There is a slow martyrdom for him in this life, and Nemesis is punishing the count in his own silent, implacable fashion.

"Die entrées vere delicious," his companion murmurs, sipping her foaming tumbler with voluptuous ease and disdain of all things; his bold eyes are shaded with a pain that is beyond her ken; she is now picking the breast of the chicken and does not regard him.

Where is the skeleton at the festival? It is here, close at hand, threatening them both with its dark and sombre shades. Evil preaches sermons full of significant meaning if sinners would but listen; there is for him neither peace nor joy, nor rest of mind.

Presently Evelyn rises, and leaving her alone joins another man, who is beckoning to him.

"You are in danger, count," this man says, eagerly. "Aaron has returned from Ireland, and is on your track. He is not far off from these very doors."

"She shall baffle him," the count whispers, pointing to Josephine.

"Can she be trusted?"

"Yes," he answers, wearily, "for she is in my power."

To avoid involvement and a scene, the pleasant little supper has to be rather abruptly terminated. It ends in Mdlle. Josephine leaving the supper-table alone, and it is needless to say how anxiously the count passes through a side entrance towards the opposite direction, to which she has taken.

"Someday I shall throw myself to the wolves," he mutters, his brow darkening in stormy rage.

(To be Continued.)

THE DRAGON.

In nearly every country, and at all times, there have been legends concerning the existence of a huge monster, who went about devastating and devouring all before it. This monster, or dragon, as it is generally called, is supposed to be the symbolical representative of arrogant power and cruelty, whose sole object is to oppose order and progress.

Although it is probable, as Brand says, that "the dragon is one of those shapes which fear has created to itself," nevertheless, from the generality of the legends concerning this winged saurian, it is possible that the existence of some species of the pterodactyl, in very remote times, may have originated the superstition. However this may have been, it is certain that this mythical animal, in all ages, has been looked upon as a minister of evil, the destruction of which was considered one of the greatest objects of human energy. The task was usually allotted to gods and heroes. Apollo killed the Python, and Perseus slew the dragon, and saved Andromeda. Hercules, as the ideal of physical power, is also represented as a dragon-slayer.

From poetry the legend of the dragon passed into art, and the Greeks and Romans bore it as an emblem on their shields and helmets. In the "Nibelungen Lied," in late times, Siegfried is represented as killing a dragon, and, in the epic of Beowulf, the two contests of the hero, first with the monster Grendel, and afterwards with the dragon, form the principal incidents of the poem. Among the Scandinavians, Thor was described as a dragon-slayer. Among the Teutonic tribes the practice of bearing the dragon as an emblem on their shields and banners was common. Among the Celts the dragon was considered the emblem of sovereignty, and as such was borne on the helmet of the monarch.

In the middle ages, in religious paintings, the dragon was looked upon as the representative of sin. Saints and martyrs are frequently depicted trampling a dragon underfoot. It is also used with this signification in the figure of St. George and the dragon. Sometimes it has been used as a symbol of heresy. A body of men in Hungary, who enrolled themselves in order to crush John Huss and his followers, called themselves Knights of the Order of the Dragon. In scripture it is a word often used to signify a sea-monster, huge serpent, &c.; thus in Deut. xxvii. 33, Jer. li. 34, and Rev. xii, it evidently implies a huge serpent. In Isa. xxvii. 1 li. 9 Ezek. xxix. 3, it may mean the crocodile, or any huge sea monster; while in Job xxx. 29, Sam. iii, Mic. i. 8, it seems to refer to some wild animal of the desert, most probably the jackal.—Ed.]

A SPADE IS A SPADE.

To be sure it is! Yet one does not wish to be continually reminded of the fact. Truth need not be spoken when it is unwelcome; therefore the candid friend, who thinks it should be spoken at all times, is not a desirable person. He thinks it his duty to be frank. Though his counsel may not have been solicited, he claims the right of an ardent friend to intrude his opinion. He has heard of your complications, and, even at the risk of incurring your censure, must immolate his feelings on the altar of friendship by deprecating your indiscretion, and frankly warning you of the consequences your fatuity will evoke. Probably, in a rash moment, you have thrown yourself on his sympathetic aid, and then he is candid with a vengeance.

"If a falsehood may do thee grace," says Prince Henry, "I'll gild it with the happiest

terms I have." Your candid friend will not even gild what he conceives to be the truth, but will damp your chilled sensibilities with the frankest pessimism. You have placed yourself at his mercy by looking to him for advice, and his advice takes the form of a nauseous and debilitating draught. Candour with these people consists in a chronic state of opposition. Plain speaking is the faculty of being unpleasant. Sincerity is the constitutional inability to temper divergence of opinion with tact and prudence. Thus candour becomes little better than a vice, and has a very prejudicial influence upon society at large.

The man who will not moderate his blunt outpourings with discretion sees no more harm in making a public demonstration of his friend's position than he does in private. He professes such an admiration for candour and "openness" that, unlike others with a keener perception of their obligation to society and to one another, he cannot keep his own counsel, whether it affects others or himself, and with laudable impartiality he announces from the housetops his own affairs and those of his neighbours. Naturally, his victims resent this interference with their privacy, and come to the conclusion that the candid friend is dangerous as a confirmed scandal-monger, and, like him, a man to be avoided.

"THE INTELLIGENT COMPOSITOR."

TYPOGRAPHICAL errors are generally attributed to the compositor, and many of the instances sound so witty or so stupid that it seems as if they must rather be inventions than actual happenings. But we never saw one cited so unlikely that we couldn't remember its match. Once we wrote that it was "like evoking the shadow of a shade" to quote forgotten writers. The phrase appeared in print thus: "Like cooking the shadow of a shad." The printer had, in burlesquing the sentiment, actually preserved and intensified it in a most striking image of unsubstantiality.

At another time we had quoted the proverbial opinion of Rosalind: "Men have died and worms have eaten them—but not for love." The printer may have been a misogynist; at all events, he substituted "women" for "worms." There are Shakespeare emendations not much better than that, perhaps. Every man of letters reserves to himself the privilege of interpreting the immortal bard to suit his own fancy.

MARRIAGE.

It is undoubtedly true that marriage harrows the natures of men. By his own fireside the husband is so comfortable and happy that he begins to prefer comfort and happiness to everything else on earth, his wife included. Yesterday he would have shared his last shilling; to-day "his first duty is to his family," and is fulfilled in a large measure by laying down vineyards and husbanding the wealth of an individual parent. Twenty years ago this man was equally capable of crime or heroism; and now he is fit for neither. His soul is asleep, and you may speak without constraint; you will not awake him.

It is not for nothing that Don Quixote was a bachelor, and Marcus Aurelius married ill. For women there is less of this danger. Marriage is of so much use to a woman, opens out to her so much of life and puts her in the way of so much more freedom and usefulness that, whether she marries ill or well, she can hardly miss some benefit. Nevertheless, some of the most genuine women in the world are found among the old maids.

EMPTY houses at Brighton, at the present time, represent a rental of £12,000 per annum, and a dormant capital of half a million of money.

AN UNWISE BENEDICT.

STRANGE as it may seem, some women occasionally indulge in intervals of silence. Some husbands are short-sighted enough not to appreciate these silent intervals, and feel that they must be symptoms of approaching dissolution. One fond husband, who noticed that his wife indulged in frequent half hours of thought, became alarmed. It was such a strange experience in his household, which was generally enlivened by a flow of conversation which resembled mountain torrents, he determined to try an experiment and see if he could not rouse the dormant powers of his wife.

So he firmly resolved to buy her a new bonnet, and announced to her his intention. It was, as all husbands will testify, an heroic measure, and one not unattended with danger. The silent wife looked at him for a moment in dumb astonishment. Then her lips opened, the flood gates were lifted, the dam was broken, and from behind those pearly teeth came an incessant and merciless current of words, which almost made him wish he had never been born. The lady was cured; she has never been silent for five consecutive minutes, day or night, since that hour.

In commenting on the matter he said, in sad and piteous tones, that his experiment was entirely successful, but that he was almost sorry he was ever induced to try it. Let his sad experience be a lesson to others.

A RUSSIAN HERO;

OR,

Marko Tyre's Treason.

CHAPTER XL.

THE ride of Colonel Dal back to town was performed with a celerity that responded to his excitement. Restoring the horse and carriage to the owner, he took his way quietly but promptly to his quarters in the palace.

"No one has been inquiring for me?" he asked of the orderly he had left on duty in his place.

"No, Colonel!"

Dal drew a long breath of relief.

"My little trip has been a success, then," he said to himself, "and it only remains for me to learn what has taken place here in my absence. Has Tyre been arrested? Of course I will not ask, but evidently nothing has been done in that direction, or I should have found a dozen waiting here to give me the exciting news. Another thing, it is to me, in all probability, that the empress will confide the duty of making the arrest."

The thought was gratifying. To seize and imprison Marko would be a genuine pleasure. Helping himself to a glass of brandy and a lunch from a table that Florette usually kept at his disposal, he was beginning to wonder where she was when she made her appearance.

"I have been prying around," she explained, after learning from Dal what he had done with Roda, and expressing her congratulations. "The empress has the Countess Dashkoff with her for an hour past. Evidently some great measure is on foot, and I am sorry that I have not been able to obtain any information as to its nature."

At this moment an orderly presented himself at the door of the apartment.

"Her majesty desires to see Colonel Dal immediately," was the announcement of the messenger.

The colonel bowed understandingly, and the orderly retired. Dal was about to leave the room when a card was brought to him by one of his subalterns.

"Show the gentleman in," he ordered, after a glance at the name. "I will see him."

The next moment Lieutenant Argolin entered.

The face of the hardy pirate was pale, and his manner strangely excited.

"You can speak freely," greeted Dal, offering his hand, as he saw from Argolin's countenance that he was full of evil news. "The presence of this lady signifies nothing."

"The captain and two of our best men have been killed in a brawl of some kind, on the shore just west of the town," said Argolin. "But that is not the worst of it. I hear that we have been betrayed! Is it so?"

"There's no doubt about it."

"Then why not act at once?" demanded Argolin, lowering his voice to a whisper. "Act on the defensive, I mean. Why not seize the empress before she can hunt us out, and carry her off to our vessel, and keep her there a prisoner until after Paul has been proclaimed emperor?"

Dal held his breath at the sublime impudence of this proposal, which, however, was perfectly in accordance, as he well knew, with all that had taken place at every great crisis of Russian history.

"I could seize her myself," added Argolin, "if you would thin out your guards upon some pretence, such as sending them away to arrest the traitors. I hear that you have been restored to favour, and that you have more authority than ever. I have twelve or fifteen of my own men in a secure place, and have no doubt that a bold effort would make us masters of the situation, and avert the blow that will otherwise fall upon us."

Dal reflected rapidly, his eyes gleaming like lightning.

"You remain here a moment with this young lady," he said. "I have a call to the empress, and will go and see what she wants. Remain here, Argolin, until further advices. I will endeavour to see you again in a few minutes."

And Dal retired from the apartment. His step was as bounding as the step of a wolf as he took his way towards the reception-room where he was awaited by the empress.

"With Tyre shut up, and the palace thinned of its guards under any pretence," he said to himself, "it would indeed be an easy matter for a score or two of resolute men to strike such a blow as Argolin has suggested. The proposition really strikes me as practical and timely. I am sick of holding life and power at the whim and caprice of a half-crazed woman. I'd sooner have Paul to deal with, if I could plant myself upon the right footing."

Thus the thought grew upon him until he found himself in Catherine's presence.

"I have sent for you, Colonel Dal," said the empress, without pausing in the agitated walk in which he found her engaged, "to direct the arrest of the traitors. Shall we seize them to-night while they are sleeping?"

"That will be the quickest and surest way of dealing with them, your majesty," answered Colonel Dal. "I have been asking myself, to be sure, how it would do to arrest them all at one swoop at their next meeting!"

"I have thought of that course," said the empress, "but I am afraid such a delay might turn to our disadvantage. Some of them might learn of our intentions, and the whole body of them make their escape."

"That is true, your majesty. Promptness and vigour are the essentials in all such cases."

"Then see to it, Colonel Dal, that all these conspirators are in the fortress before day breaks again," ordered the empress. "See that there is no mistake or delay!"

"I shall of course begin with the arrest of General Tyre," suggested Dal.

"No, omit him from your plans altogether," ordered the empress. "He is now under arrest in his room, awaiting my pleasure. I am a little at a loss how to get at him."

Dal averted his face to conceal the smile of contempt that appeared involuntarily upon it.

At the same time he bowed his assent to the orders he had received, including a gesture of dismissal, and withdrew from the apartment.

His whole daring and tricky nature was active.

He felt himself master of the situation. It was with a bright eye and satisfied mien that he went back to Argolin and Florette.

"I have got orders to arrest the whole fraternity," he said, as he seated himself between the couple. "And have got the balance of the night in which to acquit myself of this duty. Let us see, Argolin, how strong a force we can muster. I think a dozen or more of the conspirators can be collected in an hour, in view of our careful arrangements to such an end, and these and our corsairs together would present quite a formidable body."

"If you thin out your guards, Colonel. That is a great essential. You can dispose of your men in this way."

"Certainly. I have only to send them off in detachments to make the arrests which have been ordered. It would be a clever thing to have the boys appear and seize the empress just as her guards are elsewhere looking for her victims."

"What do you say, therefore, Colonel?" asked Argolin. "Shall we make a bold effort for Paul and ourselves, or shall we allow ourselves to be slaughtered?"

"Give me a minute to think," said Dal, "and I'll give you an answer!"

In the meantime, Catherine had continued her nervous walk back and forth, although every step pained her, by reason of the corpulence which afterwards grew upon her to such an extent as to almost prevent her from walking. Her face was a study. One moment she was all tenderness and admiration for our hero, and the next her features became absolutely hideous with their expression of jealousy, disappointment, and hatred.

She was in this frame of mind when a door quietly opened at one side of the apartment, and a man entered—the mysterious stranger we saw upon a former occasion presenting himself at the door of the palace.

He was, in fact, General Ivan Ruboffsky, the man to whom Rubini, in his revelations to his fellow-conspirators, had imputed such a singular history.

"I hope I don't intrude, your majesty," said the general, inclining himself profoundly.

"Oh, no! Sit down."

Seating himself, the visitor regarded the empress with a curious and half contemptuous glance as she continued to toil laboriously to and fro in her excitement.

"It must tire you to do that, your majesty," he soon ventured.

"Well, what of it? Whose business is it?" answered Catherine, without pausing in her walk, or even turning her eyes upon him.

The visitor laughed lightly.

"It is not mine, certainly," he answered, with good-natured indulgence. "I have had a very pleasant visit, your majesty, during the last forty-eight hours."

"Oh, don't bother me!"

"I merely called to say good-bye, your majesty. I am going back to my hut on the shore of the Baltic—possibly to-night, but at an early hour of the morning at the latest."

At this declaration the empress started, looking surprised, and came and leaned upon the back of the chair in which Ruboffsky was seated.

"Is not this resolution sudden?" she asked.

"Not particularly. My thoughts have been turning in this direction ever since I came here."

"Indeed? Has anything gone wrong here?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Have I seemed cross or unkind, Ivan?"

"You have seemed hurried and worried, your majesty," said Ruboffsky. "I could not help looking at you curiously as I entered, to see your face such a mirror of vexation and trouble."

I find you about as I left you twenty and odd years ago—a prey to your position. You are still surrounded by about the same class of interested hirelings. The same sort of ruffians are menacing your days. The same sort of tastes and pursuits are doing what they can to mitigate the monotony of your existence. In a word, I see that the same little miseries and

vexations which were so income to me in other days are still your portion—and I'll have none of them."

"Is it because you have anything better to offer, Ivan?" asked Catherine.

"No, I am sorry to say. My misery and desolation are not less than those that afflict you, but they are of another nature, that is all. For a score of years I have been toiling and studying in obscurity, saying to myself that I would come to you some day, as a man fit to be a ruler and leader. I said to myself that I would learn the science of government, the art of war, the ethics of society, the great ties of the social fabric, and all that it concerns a monarch to know. In these aims I have studied, but what do I find as I look around me? Simply that I am a being of another world. I am not so fit now as I was twenty years ago to be a ruler of the wild beasts who form the bulk of your subjects. I have refined myself beyond their comprehension, as also beyond the facts in the case. I see that I have made a failure of my life, even more visibly than you have made a failure of yours, and I accept the situation. Go on with your schemes, your toils, your battles, and accept my best wishes and blessings. I am going back to my solitude."

He arose as he concluded, and stood up beside the empress, tall and commanding, yet sad of mien, wearied and disgusted.

"You were always strange, Ivan," said Catherine, laying her hand upon his arm. "It was perhaps for the possession of those strange qualities—which I cannot comprehend even now—that I loved you better than I have ever loved any other human being. You were certainly unselfish and noble. I am not sure, however, that we were unwise in separating."

"No, it was for the best," said Rubofsky, promptly. "We never should have got along pleasantly. We never should have agreed upon any of the great questions daily arising for solution. But there will come a day, Catherine, when your soul will respond to mine fully. It is that future day when you will know," and he took a pinch of dirt from a flower-pot upon the table, "when you will know that this is all that remains, sooner or later, of all the thrones in the world—a mere handful of dust!"

He drew the empress to his heart a moment, kissing and caressing her, and then released her and left the apartment.

And this was the romance of Catherine's life! the mystery of her existence! This man was really her husband.

As Rubofsky had said, Rubofsky disagreed early with his imperial wife, and had quietly turned hermit, buying himself with hopes of qualifying himself to be eventually a great ruler.

All had turned to dust in his grasp, even as all had turned to bitterness and disenchantment in the hopes and aims of Catherine.

Thus they had met after twenty years of voluntary absence, and thus they now separated.

CHAPTER XLII

DROPPING into a chair, the empress gazed long and earnestly in the direction in which Rubofsky had vanished. The words he had uttered still echoed in her soul. She felt their force. Of what use is a throne to its possessor? Of what use is kingly power? Is not the slave often happier than his master?

Of what real utility, of what real advantage, had been to her—she could not help asking herself—all the aims and toils and strifes of her existence?

She had worked like a slave, been hunted like a criminal, had found her ungratified aspirations tumbling back upon her soul and betraying her into all sorts of weaknesses and debasements, and had not really known an hour of peace and real enjoyment from the moment of her advent to power.

In what respect, therefore, could she boast over Rubofsky, or in what respect had her life been more useful or happier than his?

"Surely we are all phantoms in pursuit of other phantoms," she said to herself, sick at heart, as she thus looked after the man who had once been to her a glorious dream. "If I had been less mortal, I might have walked beside Ivan to a high spiritual place, and doubtless both of us would have been wiser and better."

She touched a bell suddenly, and a chamberlain thrust his head into the apartment.

Our hero soon made his appearance. Except that he had removed his sword, being under arrest, there was no notable change in his appearance. He saluted with grave dignity.

He was not yet aware of the abduction of our heroine, or of the charges Colonel Dal had made against him. He only knew, from having been ordered into arrest, that he had fallen into disfavour, but, for his brains as he might, he could not form the least plausible guess as to why this change had come upon him.

"You may sit down, General Tyre," said Catherine, coldly, "as the interview may be of some duration. Besides, I wish to send study you at my leisure."

Marko saw that she was labouring under an excitement she could not wholly conceal. He accepted the chair proffered him, at an imperative wave of the imperial hand, and signified by his attitude that he was at her service and disposal.

"Here is a list of names, General Tyre," resumed the empress, as she passed to our hero the document Dal had furnished her. "I cannot say that I am particularly surprised to see your name among them. Look over the list, and tell me what you know of any of these persons."

"First of all, your majesty," said Marko, quietly. "I must observe that the list is evidently in the handwriting of Colonel Dal."

"Well, what does that signify?" asked the empress.

"Possibly that the entire matter in hand is fictitious, that is all, your majesty."

He looked over the list quietly, while the empress watched him as a tiger watches its intended victim.

"Speak, sir! What do you know of these people?" demanded Catherine, in a tone of impatience.

"I know nothing about them, as a whole, your majesty," was the answer. "I have seen Argolin. Your majesty will remember the report I made of my strange visit to Argolin's vessel, after Dal's attempt upon my life. At that time—and your majesty will, I know, do me the justice of recalling the fact—I learned from Argolin that Dal was a spy and traitor. It seems that he has now betrayed the conspiracy to your majesty."

"And has included your name, you will note, in the list of conspirators?"

"Has he?" and our hero turned his attention to the list again. "Well, that is only natural, your majesty. He does this for revenge."

"And do you mean to say that you were never associated with these men, and that you never attended one of their meetings?"

"Only my respect for your majesty could induce me to answer such a question," said Marko. "So stupid an accusation is beneath contempt. If your majesty should ever lay hands upon these men and question them, I have no doubt their unanimous testimony would be that they have never seen me in their midst. At any rate, I have had no more to do with all these men and their conspiracy than has your majesty."

The empress looked as if these quiet observations had made a decided impression upon her.

"Your suggestion is a good one," she commented. "I can, of course, learn from these men if you are one of their number. Meanwhile, are you aware that you have fallen into disfavour?"

"The fact is sufficiently palpable, your majesty, when an officer is ordered into arrest and his sword taken away from him!"

"But what is the cause of your disgrace?"

"Possibly this lie by Dal, possibly some similar falsehood by Dal or somebody else, your

majesty. Of course, I have no means of knowing what wretched little conspiracies of this nature are taking place behind my back, unless your majesty chooses to enlighten me. But that any man will ever accuse me of anything dishonourable, sword in hand, and with a due sense of personal responsibility, and his eyes flashed fire, "is something I never expect to see!"

"Your skill as a swordsman is well known, I believe," said Catherine, "and a victory of that sort over an accuser would signify nothing for your innocence or against it. Have you any explanations to give me, or any views respecting your situation?"

"Views, your majesty? I simply see that I am not in favour, but what views should I have on the subject? If your majesty has found a better servant than I, I need only tender my congratulations. If I have been sacrificed for a lying traitor, not upon me rests the responsibility!"

"Well, what shall I do with you?"

"I don't care particularly what you do with me, your majesty," said Marko. "I am quite disenchanted. I find the palace in the hands of a low cut-throat, who is probably as false to your majesty as to me, with this difference, that his baseness to your majesty is not fully detected. I find that my dream of court life was an illusion; that fraud and crime are rampant around us; that blind chance seems to go hand in hand with wisdom; that fair exteriors appear to cover false hearts; that we are promoted to-day only to be debased and humiliated tomorrow; that friendship is a sham; that gratitude is only a name; and that I have really no desire to remain in the disgusting little pit of greeds and corruptions into which I have fallen. Should your majesty ever see fit to give me my freedom, after establishing my innocence, I shall be glad to retreat to some desert and turn hermit."

The empress held her breath as she listened to these declarations.

"How much he talks like Rubofsky!" she said to herself. "Nay, how much he looks like him!"

In the silence that succeeded, there came a hurried rush of footsteps, approaching one of the doors of the apartment.

"May fit please your majesty—something very important!" exclaimed Gules, as he opened the door and withdrew.

Two persons entered. They were Rubofsky and Mrs. Merensky.

"Here is an old friend of mine," said the general. "She has come here upon very important business, the says, and I have taken the liberty—"

"Merensky!" the empress uttered the name in a voice of delightful amazement, springing to her feet.

"The sister of Mrs. Fleasby?"

"The name, your majesty," answered Mrs. Merensky, advancing and throwing back her veil. "I have come, in the first place, to see if my sister made full confession and restoration, and—"

"One moment, Mrs. Merensky," interrupted the empress. "What did you do with the boy that your sister, the late Mrs. Fleasby, placed in your hands twenty-two years ago?"

"I brought him up as well as I could," your majesty, until he was about ten years of age, when he turned out such a smart and good boy that I made every effort to find him a friend and protector who would take a father's part towards him. As my husband was a worthless creature, as well as a mere gaudiness, I had always refused to call the lad by our family name; and when I finally found the lad a protector, I begged that protector to give the lad a good name, and I named him fairly upon the sea of life, which he did."

"And who was this protector?" asked Catherine, excitedly.

"Baron Yermolof," echoed Catherine, recalling in great agitation. "Did your sister tell you who the child was?"

"Not at first, no, your majesty. She only

said that the child belonged to a titled lady, who had reasons for not owning it. But later—just before she died—that very night, in fact when she came to the palace and died here—

"She then told you all, did she?" interrupted Catherine. "Then why haven't you come to me sooner with your revelations?"

"Because I have been shut up by Dr. Robini, who has restrained me of my liberty," answered Mrs. Merensky. "It seems, however, that Robini has fled the country—at least, this is the belief of his people, and hence I have prevailed upon them to release me. And here I am."

"Baron Yermolof is in waiting, your majesty," announced Golos, again appearing at the entrance.

The name was echoed in a general chorus of amazement.

"Admit him," ordered the empress.

A moment later the baron made his appearance. He was the beau-ideal of a travelled diplomat, stately, polished and elegant. His numerous years sat so lightly upon him that he could have readily passed for a man in the prime of life, had it not been for the whiteness of his hair.

"Welcome, Baron," exclaimed Catherine, extending her hand. "I am glad to see you."

"Your majesty will excuse my calling at such a late hour," said Yermolof, "but the case is urgent. I arrived scarcely an hour since from my long wandering in Italy and elsewhere, and was horrified to find that a new conspiracy was about to burst upon your majesty's throne."

The breath of the venerable diplomat gave out at this point. He was obliged to pause in his revelations, and the empress herself thoughtfully led him to a chair.

"Another conspiracy?" she murmured. "It seems the air is full of them."

"But this one—is knocked in the head," gasped the baron. "I have already placed the matter in the hands of the police."

"So that the danger is over, Baron?" Be assured of my best thanks. And now, Baron, let me call your attention to another matter. Do you know this woman?"

Mrs. Merensky advanced in front of the diplomat in obedience to a gesture from the empress. Yermolof glanced at her sharply.

"Of course I know her," he then said. "She is Mrs. Merensky, a sister of Mrs. Flossky, who was a long time at the palace in our younger days, your majesty. She has changed a little, like the rest of us, but I would know her if I met her in Karaschanka."

"One question more, then," said Catherine, with suppressed emotion. "It seems that Mrs. Merensky placed in your hands, ten or twelve years ago, a boy about ten years of age, with the request that you would find that boy a home in some wealthy family, and that you would give the lad a name of your own invention. Do you remember this little circumstance?"

"I do, indeed, your majesty," replied the diplomat. "The truth is, I am not good at forgetting anything. A fact once brought to my knowledge remains fixed in my memory for ever."

"You remember the boy perfectly, therefore, Baron?" said Mrs. Merensky, "and can tell us what you did with him?"

"Certainly—certainly," said the old diplomat, as promptly as before. "I liked the lad very much, knew there was excellent stuff in him, felt that he would make his way in the world, and all that sort of thing. I accordingly accepted all the responsibility in the case, and brought the lad to the palace, where I had the pleasure of securing him a position as one of your majesty's pages."

"As one of my pages?" murmured Catherine, turning pale. "Baron Yermolof, who and what is that page?"

"He's a hero of whom I have never lost sight from that day to this, at least with my spiritual eye, which has looked back to him from all my wanderings," said the baron, as he arose and shook hands heartily with our hero, having at just this instant caught sight of him. "In a word, that boy given me by Mrs. Merensky—

that boy for whom I procured the appointment of page in your majesty's service—that glorious young hero is no other than Marko Tyre!"

(To be Concluded in our Next.)

THE METRIC OR DECIMAL SYSTEM.

The following simple table gives all that there is in the metric or decimal system of weights and measures.

MONEY.	
10 mills make a cent.	
10 cents make a dime.	
10 dimes make a dollar.	
10 dollars make an eagle.	

LENGTH.	
10 milli-metres make a centimetre.	
10 centi-metres make a decimetre.	
10 deci-metres make a metre.	
10 metres make a dekametre.	
10 deca-metres make a hectometre.	
10 hecto-metres make a kilometre.	
10 kilo-metres make a myriametre.	

WEIGHT.	
10 milli-grammes make a centigramme.	
10 centi-grammes make a decigramme.	
10 deci-grammes make a gramme.	
10 grammes make a decagramme.	
10 deca-grammes make a hectogramme.	
10 hecto-grammes make a kilogramme.	
10 kilo-grammes make a myriagramme.	

CAPACITY.	
10 milli-litres make a centilitre.	
10 centi-litres make a decilitre.	
10 deci-litres make a litre.	
10 litres make a decalitre.	
10 deca-litres make a hectolitre.	

The square and cubic measures are nothing more than the squares and cubes of the measures of length. (Thus a square and a cubic milli-metre are the square and the cube of which one side is a millimetre in length.) The are and stère are other names for the square dekametre and the cubic metre.

SCIENCE.

A NEW ESTIMATE OF THE WORLD'S AGE.

GEOLOGISTS, astronomers, and physicists alike have hitherto been baffled in their attempts to set up any satisfactory kind of chronometers which will approximately measure geological time, and thus afford us some clue to the antiquity of our globe. Mr. Millard Reade, of Liverpool, has recently contributed to the Royal Society a very suggestive paper, in which he endeavours to grapple with the question by employing the limestone rocks of the earth's crust as an index of geological time. Limestones have been in course of formation from the earliest known geological periods, but it would appear that the later formed strata are more calcareous than the earlier, and that there has, in fact, been a gradually progressive increase of calcareous matter. The very extensive disposition of carbonate of lime over wide areas of the ocean bottom at the present day is sufficiently attested by the recent soundings of the Challenger.

According to Mr. Reade's estimate, the sedimentary crust of the earth is at least one mile in average actual thickness, of which probably one tenth consists of calcareous matter. In seeking the origin of this calcareous matter, it is assumed that the primitive rocks of the original crust were of the nature of granite or basaltic rocks. By the disintegration of such rocks, calcareous and other sedimentary deposits have been formed. The amount of lime salts in water which drain districts made of granites and basalts is found, by a comparison of analyses, to be on an average about 3.73 parts in 100,000 parts of water. It is further assumed that the exposed areas of igneous rocks, taking an average

throughout all geological time, will bear to the exposures of sedimentary rocks a ratio of about one to nine. From these and other data Mr. Reade concludes that the elimination of the calcareous matter now found in all the sedimentary strata must have occupied at least 600 millions of years. This, therefore, represents the minimum age of the world.

The author infers that the formation of the Laurentian, Cambrian, and Silurian strata must have occupied about 200 millions of years; the old red sandstone, the carboniferous, and the poikilitic systems, another 200 millions; and all the other strata, the remaining 200 millions. Mr. Reade is, therefore, led to believe that geological time has been enormously in excess of the limits urged by certain physicists; and that it has been ample to allow for all the changes which, on the hypothesis of evolution, have occurred in the organic world.

THE LONGEST TUNNEL IN THE WORLD.

THE Joseph II. mining adit, at Schemnitz, Hungary, begun in 1782 and finished last October, is now the longest tunnel in the world. Its length is 16,538 metres; that of the St. Gotthard tunnel being 14,920, and the Mount Cenis tunnel 12,233 metres.

The object of the adit is the drainage of the important gold and silver mines at Schemnitz. It furnishes a geological section more than ten miles in length, and gives not only valuable information as to the downward prolongation of the lodes known in the upper levels, but some new ones have been traversed, and the entire series of rocks, with their mutual limits as well as modifications and occasional transitions, are disclosed without interruption.

The entire cost of the tunnel was 4,599,000 florins—about £460,000. Its height is 3 metres; width, 1.6 metre. By the methods of working employed during the last three years it would have taken twenty-seven years to do the entire work.

A SINGULAR BEGGAR.

IN the finest and most frequented streets in Rome, every day might have been seen an old woman, bent under the weight of years, clad in wretched mourning. She wore a tattered bonnet on her head, a thick black veil over her features, and a pair of ragged gloves on her fingers. She never spoke, but took with a kind of growl whatever small coin the passengers might vouchsafe her. That old woman's gains were twenty francs per diem; but who was she? No one could tell, and she never answered questions.

The other day a couple of municipal guards laid hands on her, and, bundling her into a cab, took her to the Mendicant's Home. One of the female attendants stripped her, and suddenly, from the filthy, fetid envelope of rags, emerged, Cinderella-like, a vigorous young woman, considerably on this side of thirty, fresh-coloured, fat, and prepossessing. Her make-up was a marvel of effect. Her curved spine was "arranged" with a cord which passed round her neck and was fastened at the knee. Her hump was manufactured from a ball of rags. Her wrinkled and dirty white face was managed with imitation parchment. On inquiry it was found that this young woman was of good family, and that the gains she so cleverly earned were taken regularly home to her parents.

THE Garrick Theatre, Whitechapel, has been opened under the management of Miss May Bulwer with comic opera.

THE sacred works and oratorios to be performed at the Birmingham Musical Festival next August, under Sir Michael Costa's direction, are Handel's "Messiah" and "Israel in Egypt," Mendelssohn's "Elijah" and "Hymn of Praise," Rossini's "Moses in Egypt" and Cherubini's "Requiem." The new works will be by M. Saint-Saëns and by Herr Max Bruch.



[A HAPPY REUNION.]

MR. POTT'S TELEGRAM.

MR. AND MRS. POTT had always been an affectionate, happy couple, with one child, who possessed her handsome father's smile, and her pretty mother's lovely eyes, and was altogether a bewitching little creature.

Mr. and Mrs. Pott had always been a very happy pair. I do not pretend to assert that no clouds ever rose upon their horizon; but the clouds were never heavy enough completely to shut out the sun; and when they passed, the sky looked all the brighter from the contrast. Of course, at intervals, there had been little differences, little quarrels even, but only just fierce enough to give a zest to the kissing and making up which had speedily followed.

But it was so long since even such trifling shadows had arisen, that the pair scarcely remembered them, except now and then, by way of a jest, or as a warning to some adventurous couple just setting up in partnership. Everything had conspired to make their road an easy one to travel.

Mr. Pott had succeeded wonderfully in his profession. Mrs. Pott's little dowry had consisted of lands, which had risen in value; so that between her share and his earnings they were if not rich, very comfortably off. Little Mamie grew prettier every day, and was good-natured herself.

Yes, people considered Gershom Pott and his

wife an enviable couple. What was more, they considered themselves so. He was thirty now, and she some four years younger, and still quite girlish in looks. Her name was Clementina, and privileged friends used to call her Tiny Pott, which was slightly impertinent, but very natural.

They had had two years, or almost two years, without a break in this sunshine. Mrs. Pott could have recalled her late episode of suffering, if she had chosen; but when the pair reviewed their little stormy passages, that particular one was never dwelt upon. Clementina had been jealous of a fascinating widow, who had loomed for a season upon their horizon, and who had professed great affection for her former school-mate, and was so happy to meet her again!

That was perfectly reasonable, and Tiny shared her old comrade's enthusiasm. But when bewitching Mrs. Johnson seemed inclined, at times, to act as if it had been Tiny's husband, and not Tiny, who had been her school-friend, the face of matters changed.

But Mr. Pott always declared that he had not been for an instant dazzled by this wandering meteor; and Clementina satisfied herself that at least Gershom's eyes were opened to the designing creature's real character, and Mrs. Johnson's departure from the city, where the pair lived, ended the matter completely.

A very happy couple—no more clouds ever could arise!

It was early in the spring of 1876 when Mrs. Pott's uncle came to visit his niece and

her husband. He was a rich bachelor, and was charming besides, so he was received with the enthusiasm due a relative of that sort. He fell ill of rheumatic fever, and Clementina nursed him. Soon after he was attacked important business called Mr. Pott abroad—to the very town where an ancient aunt of his resided.

It was decided that little Mamie should accompany her father. It would be pleasant to him, and convenient to Mrs. Pott, who was so constantly occupied with her uncle. Into the bargain the old aunt had, for a long time, been begging that the child might make her a visit.

As she was rich, and Gershom was her nearest living relation, it appeared to the parents that it would be unkind to thwart her; the poor sufferer must die soon, and they should always reproach themselves then for not letting her see her great niece; and—and—she never had made her will, and heads of charitable societies were always fawning upon her, and indeed it would be positively sinful to stand in the dear little girl's light.

So it was settled. Mr. Pott and Mamie and Mamie's nurse, went away, and Clementina remained at home to guard the household gods and nurse her uncle back to convalescence.

Three weeks was the time set for their absence. But when six had passed they had not yet returned. Clementina had received numerous letters saying that everything was going well; that Mamie was a wonderful favourite with her aunt; that Mr. Pott's business was succeeding beyond his wildest hopes. However much she might miss her treasure, there had been no occasion for Tiny to feel anxious. No, not even when Gershom, in one epistle, incidentally mentioned that the marauding widow, Elvira Johnson, was residing in the town where his aunt lived.

Clementina actually smiled to recall her own past folly. She wondered how she could ever have been idiot enough to let that rapid creature disturb her peace for an instant! In the plenitude of her magnanimity, she wrote Gershom that she hoped he would now and then call upon the lady, else she (Elvira,) who had always been, and always would be, a goose, might think that she (Clementina,) had forbidden such visits, and so exult.

Meanwhile, Mr. Groves, the uncle, had got better. He and Clementina went to stop in the establishment of a physician, who had some wonderful process for curing rheumatism. They were there ten days. Then Mr. Groves found himself so well that, as he had business which required attention, they went back to town—that is, Clementina went directly back, but Mr. Groves stopped at the house of a friend a few miles from the city, proposing to continue his journey next day under the charge of his manservant.

Clementina was surprised not to find a letter awaiting her. Still she felt no anxiety. In truth, a determination which she had formed, prevented her dwelling upon thoughts which might have roused any fears in her mind. She had decided to join her wanderers, spend a week at M—and then return with them. She had communicated her intention to her uncle, and he had approved.

"You see it will give Gershom such a pleasant surprise," said Clementina, smiling on the picture which rose on the instant in her imagination.

"And the change will do you good. You must be quite worn out with all your care of me," responded her uncle, with an appreciation which rich relations do not always display.

"Not in the least!" cried Clementina. "But it will be such a pleasant surprise to Gershom!"

That was all she could think of; the idea roused so many delightful fancies that she kissed her uncle; but it was rather a kind of kissing Gershom by proxy than a salute really intended for Mr. Groves. He happened to turn his head, without noticing her intention, and received the kiss on the tip of his nose, whereat Clementina laughed heartily.

"You will be as comfortable as if I were at

home," she added. "The servants are all so good, and I'll only be away a week."

"Of course—of course," he said, and so the matter was settled; this conversation taking place during their homeward journey.

So all that afternoon, after she reached the sanctuary of her happiness, Clementina was very busy with her preparations for departure. Uncle John would be in town the next morning so she would start at night, after seeing him again established in the pretty quarters she had assigned to him.

Clementina had never prepared for a journey with such delightful anticipations. So excitedly happy was she, that she had even a satisfaction in recalling those days when she had been jealous. She wondered how it could have been that, for a long time, even after her recovery, the memory made so sore a spot in her heart, that she had to shut her eyes to the episode! Oh, she was worlds—lives—past the impossibility of such nonsense now! She was going to her dear Gershom—her noble, perfect Gershom! Why, much as she had always loved him, she had never really appreciated him as she ought! Sometimes she had set up her opinion against his—she never would again—she would tell him so—tell him that he was a king among men, and she only worthy to sit at his feet, and worship!

She sang over her packing. She sang over everything she did. She danced up and down stairs, in a fashion so undignified, that it was well the servants did not happen to spy her. She really could not be happy enough. Her very impatience to be gone; her feeling that the next day would never come; her looking a dozen times at the clock, and scolding the hands for moving so slowly, all this added to her ecstasy.

She was a devoted mother, and what is less common, a sensible one; but just now, she could not think so much even of darling little Mamie as she would have expected. Gershom was all in all for the time—the lover of her girlhood—the husband of her youth—the idle of all coming years—the—

Then she was interrupted by the entrance of Bridget.

Her tea was waiting. Being alone, she had dined early in the day, or made a pretence of doing so.

She had finished her packing. She was ready to go downstairs and rest, and dream of Gershom.

She told herself this, as if she had not been doing it all the afternoon, but meant to begin, by the way of a little relaxation, which she could indulge in, now her work was done. She stood before the glass and smoothed her hair, changed her collar, and "put herself to rights," though it was unnecessary; for she was one of those tidy, little, small bodies who never looked untidy or tumbled. She gazed quite severely in the mirror to see if she had grown thin or worn. Would Gershom find her pretty still? Would—

Oh, what a goose she was! She broke off in her meditations to laugh at her own nonsense.

She would tell Gershom just how insanely she had behaved; yes, she would; and he might laugh, too, perhaps; but all the same his eyes would be moist, and he would hold her close to his heart, in his great, strong arms, and whisper—ah, would-to-morrow never come, so that she might be on her road towards the realisation of her bliss!

She went down into a cosy little apartment off the drawing-rooms, and found it looking as bright as possible.

The tea-tray was on the table; the urn was panting and bubbling like a diminutive, fat alderman; there were some of cook's delicious water muffins, the particular sort of sweet cake and preserves for which she had a weakness; and now Bridget appeared with a hot mutton-chop between two plates.

"For sure ye ate no dinner, ma'am, and says I howiver will ye stand a long journey if ye kape letting yer inside get emptier and emptier?"

And then Clementina laughed at Bridget, and promised to eat the chop, though she was far above the need of earthly food just then. She seated herself at the table and prepared to begin.

But just as she did so the outer bell rang a furious peal.

"The postman," said Mrs. Pott. "It's too late for him, ma'am," said Bridget, and hurried away to answer the importunate summons.

In a moment or two she returned, bearing a yellow envelope in her hand.

"Sure it's one of the telegraphies," she said; "and fair, ma'am, it's my belief Mither Pott'll have come to tell you that he'll be here to-morrow, so that ye can't surprise him with your journey."

She laid the despatch on the table and ran off to settle with the bearer thereof.

Clementina's first feeling was one of intense disappointment.

She had been so high up in the clouds that it was hard, very hard, to have any change made in the details of her beautiful vision!

Of course, the telegram was from Gershom. Of course it was to announce his arrival. Equally, of course, she should be delighted, more than happy, to welcome him and darling little Mamie.

Still, she had set her heart on giving him a surprise, and human nature always rebels when it is disappointed, more especially in just such a case as this.

Gershom was the best and dearest of men. But he had his foibles. Only a man would upset arrangements in this fashion?

It was bliss to know he was coming, he and Mamie (somehow, she had unconsciously accepted Bridget's version, as entirely as if Bridget had read the telegram aloud), but yet—but yet.

She had arranged such a beautiful surprise, and now it was all thrown away. He was coming and she should welcome him with joy; but in a way it would be joy prepared in advance, cut and dried to order; while, if left to herself, she would have managed so differently, so much better.

All these thoughts, half-formed only, flitted through her mind in a flash: a sort of guilty consciousness that she ought to be ashamed to indulge them making an undercurrent to their rush.

Then she had stretched out her hand, taken up the envelope, and was opening it. As she did so disappointment and vaguely admitted remorse, and every other sensation, faded under the certainty that she was about to read the announcement that her darlings were on the road home! Gershom would have telegraphed the last thing before entering the train. Why, they might be home to-morrow—the next day at furthest.

She tore open the envelope, read the heavily impressed capitals, re-read, dropped the page, put her hands to her head, seized the sheet anew, and read once more.

She was not asleep. She was not crazy. She held the telegram. She was reading. It was all real—all real!

And this was the despatch:

"DEAR TINEY.—Have got divorce all right. To-morrow I marry Mrs. J.—I send Mamie bank to you; keeping her three new white dresses, because they just fit Mrs. J.'s little girl. (Signed) G. Pott."

She had read it—it was true—and she was dying!

If Clementina could be said to think, that was what she thought.

But I told you that she was a sensible little woman.

She did not faint. She did not cry out, and bring in the servants. When the room steadied itself again, and the first dulled sensation (as if she had suddenly received a blow on the back of her head) wore off she could use her reason.

She read the telegram again. Then she said to herself, it was a hoax, of course.

How idiotic of her, not to have known that, at once!

Some cruel, practical joker had made a bet, to play her husband and her a trick. Perhaps Gershom had boasted that nothing would make his wife think ill of him. Perhaps—but no matter.

She must have the thing set right. What could she do? She would not telegraph to Gershom, for what could she say? The thing was a falsehood.

Still she could not sleep till it was cleared up.

How—the way? Oh, wait! Only that morning Uncle Groves had asked her to write a letter for him to a friend in M—. She remembered the name, the address—it was to Henry Upson, he was a judge of the courts. That man would know!

It was a falsehood—a hoax—but she must clear it up! She seized pen and paper, and wrote:

"HENRY UPSON.—Did man named Pott get divorce in your courts within a week? Keep secret. Reply at once. Vitally important to know, without delay."

She signed her uncle's name, and put the address of her house; then called Bridget to get a hack, and was soon driving away to the telegraph office.

She was inside, giving her despatch; preparing the answer; hearing the man say she should have the response that evening, if it arrived before midnight.

She was at home again. She had ordered the servants to bed. She was alone, waiting—waiting.

She forced herself to be calm. She held a book before her eyes sometimes, and insisted on reading.

She even read aloud, to be certain that she was fixing her mind on the page, and actually heard her voice, in the middle of a paragraph, saying:

"It is a hoax—a hoax—but I must know—I shall die, if I don't. Knows soon—no, I shall go mad!"

Then she flung the book down, frightened by her own voice.

She paced up and down. She fell on her knees, and prayed!

More and more plainly, as the hours went on, Elvira Johnson's image rose before her; the woman's fascinations; the certainty that, for a season, Gershom had yielded thereto; for a long while she had denied the fact to her soul; but it was true, all the same.

Oh, she wronged him! She dared to think ill of him—her love—her husband. And all on the strength of that silly telegram, which she knew was a hoax!

Hark, the clock was striking twelve! No despatch till morning, now. She must wait. She—

A ring at the bell interrupted her thought. She rushed into the hall, where Bridget, by her orders, had left the gas burning.

She hurried on to the street door, unlocked it, flung it open.

"Telegram, ma'am—please to sign this," cried a creature, wrapped from head to foot in an oil-skin coat, that gave him a sort of resemblance to a monster fish standing on his tail.

As he spoke, he held out a long, narrow book.

Clementina took a pencil, attached to her watch and chain, and signed her name where he bade her.

"Night, ma'am," said the man, and shut the door.

She was back in her little boudoir. There was no necessity for further misery or doubt. She held in her hands the refutation of that first wicked, absurd despatch!

She opened the envelope, and read:

"Pott got divorce yesterday. Married Widow Upson to-day."

A long, low groan sounded through the stillness of the room; a groan so full of agony, that had there been any human creature near to listen it must have sounded like a shriek in his

ear. Then Clementina fainted away. From that time, until the day broke, she went from one insensible fit to another, with terrible hysterical spasms filling up the intervals of consciousness.

A weaker woman would have rung for assistance, have roused the servants. Not Tiny. She believed that she should die, but she meant to die alone! They might find her dead, and when the truth became patent, declare that the trouble killed her. But at least no human being should know what she had suffered in dying.

At last the idea of death brought back the recollection of her child. She had positively forgotten the poor little creature! No, she had no right to die. If she could live, it was her duty to do so, for her daughter's sake, else the friendless innocent might fall into the hands of Elvira Johnson—no, Elvira Pott! Then, if that was her name, who was she—she, Clementina?

So all sorts of grotesquely absurd ideas mixed themselves up with her miseries, and took away even from the dignity which despair ought to possess! And a coal rolled out of the grate, and burned the rug, and she was nauseated by the smell of smoking wool, and had to take the tongs and pick up the coal, all the while wondering why she did not let it alone, let the house burn even, and end her anguish by consuming her in its flames.

So the night dragged by. When day was breaking she got up to her chamber and dropped down on the bed, and had to remember it had been their chamber—and now! Mamie's room was next. Clementina tottered out of her own and into that; fell head foremost on the little couch, and then lay quite still for several hours. The morning came. The servants were up. She could hear the sounds of reviving life in the street, in the house—and she was alive, and must live! And the hours went on. Noon came. Her uncle returned. She found strength somewhere to get downstairs; walked into the room where he sat awaiting her, and put the first telegram in his hands; she offered no other greeting. He, frightened half out of his senses by her face, read the lines, understood quicker than many men would have done, and cried out:

"It's a hoax! Have you telegraphed? Wait—I'll telegraph to my friend, Upson. You remember—he lives in the town."

She thrust the second despatch into his hand. He read that, and sat dumb. Having someone near, now, upon whom she could lean Tiny gave way completely.

The afternoon which good Mr. Groves passed he was not likely ever to forget. Almost the worst of anything was to feel so helpless; yet what to do he could not tell. To add to all, Tiny would not have a doctor, nor let him call anybody, when the hysterical spasms seized her.

"If you do," she said, "I'll kill myself! I shall live it through, but nobody but you must know what I suffer!" Then regret would seize her. "It is selfish of me to make you suffer," would be her lament. And then, of course, he had to assure her that he was thankful to be with her, that, at least, she was not alone.

He had a dozen different plans in his head; but none of them came to anything. Indeed, the poor, mild old bachelor, used to the quietest of lives, near whom a sensation had never before come in the whole course of his recollection, was quite incapable of putting his chaotic thoughts into execution, even if Tiny would have permitted him. What use to telegraph to the aunt, or to anybody? Gershom was divorced, and married. He had a new wife. And her child—her child!

It was late in the afternoon, when a fresh agony assailed the wretched woman. If the child should not arrive. If Gershom had not sent her. If he did not mean to. If he had only despatched that telegram to keep her quiet, in case she heard of his nefarious conduct, so that he should have time to get away beyond reach, beyond finding, with her daughter. What if he gave the child over to Elvira Johnson—no, not

Johnson any longer.—to Elvira, his wife—his wife!

Bridget and the cook knew that something had happened; but they were ordered to keep in the basement. Luncheon was refused. Dinner was paid no attention to. What did it all mean, they wondered? The day went and evening was coming on—and Mamie was not yet arrived!

"If she does not come to-night, you shall start in the morning, I am quite well enough," Mr. Groves said, over and over. He could say nothing else.

Half-past six came. "She would have been here, by now," said Tiny. "I must wait—wait till to-morrow. Oh, uncle, I am killing you. What a weak wretch I am! You shall try and eat some dinner. I will go upstairs, and lie down. I promise to rest, if you will promise to eat something."

So he promised. But first, he went upstairs with her, covered her up on the bed, kissed her, and cried over her, and then went away.

Tiny fell asleep. She was awakened by a noise in the hall; the sound of voices; at least, she thought she heard voices. But all day long her brain had been so astray, that, even now, she could not tell what might be real, what delusion!

A voice again—oh, Heaven—Mamie's voice, crying:

"Mamma, mamma!" Then a rushing of the voice; eager, low tones. It might all be fancy—she must know! Tiny sprang from her bed, rushed to the door, opened it, and—fell into her husband's arms.

When she came to herself he was still holding her, while, on either side, crouched her uncle and Mamie, both crying quietly.

And now let us explain. This was the telegram which Mr. Pott had really written:

"HAVE got the dividends all right. Mention matter to Mr. J. I send Mamie's photo to you. Loves, from being taken in a plain, white dress. Done to please her and Mrs. J's little girl."

I forgot, in the beginning, to mention that Pott wrote a hand several degrees worse than Lord Byron's or Douglas Jerrold's.

Some Pott, but not Tiny's, had got a divorce, and had, immediately after, married a Mrs. Johnson. The names were common enough not to render the coincidence surprising.

Gershom had kept his return a secret, and had sent the despatch just to prevent his wife's expecting him; because he wanted to give her an agreeable surprise—and he did, in spite of all that had happened.

At this present, Gershom and Tiny are a very happy pair. Mamie grows in grace. Old uncle Groves lives with them.

But though they are people who laugh a great deal, even over their own mistakes and shortcomings, you may be certain there is one memorable crisis which they never even think of without feeling tears very near their eyes, and thanksgivings very close to their lips.

You do not believe the incident, I perceive.—but it really happened. After all, telegrams are not infallible. Like the rest of us, they make mistakes sometimes.

F. L. B.

AFFECTATION.

In their personal civilities toward each other, the Chinese are absurdly affected. They substitute artificial ceremonies for natural actions. Their expressions mean as little as the ceremonies. If a Chinese is asked how he finds himself in health, he answers: "Very well; thanks to your abundant felicity." If they would tell a man that he looks well in health, they say, "Prosperity is painted on their face," or, "your air announces your happiness." If you render them any service, they say, "My thanks shall be immortal." If you praise them, they answer, "How shall I dare to persuade myself of what you say of me?" If you dine with them, they tell you at parting, "We have not treated you with sufficient distinction." If

two people meet after a long separation, they both fall on their knees, and bend their faces to the earth several times in succession."

CHLORIDE OF LIME AS AN INSECTICIDE.

Rats, mice, and insects will at once desert ground on which a little chloride of lime has been sprinkled. Plants may be protected from insect plagues by treating their stems with a solution of it. It has often been noticed that a patch of land which has been treated in this way remains religiously respected by grubs, while the unprotected beds round about are literally devastated. Fruit trees may be guarded from the attacks of grubs by attaching to their trunks pieces of tow smeared with a mixture of chloride of lime and hog's lard, and ants and grubs already in possession will rapidly vacate their position.

FACETIE.

A BAD CASE.

TOTAL ABSTAINER: "Oh, Shuffest Shuffles! Intoxicated again. Do you know the place where drunkards go to?"

SHUFFLES: "Course I do—(hic). The place where they—(hic)—canish get moah for their monish—(hic)." —Judy.

DIFFICULT TO PLEASE.

MASTER: "Why didn't you answer the bell before?"

SLAVE: "I didn't hear it, sir."

MASTER: "Now, don't answer me. I won't have it."

HE WAS A CAREFUL MAN.

AUNTY: "Well, love, did Mr. McSiller propose?"

EDITH: "No, aunty; but he was on the very verge of it when—"

AUNTY: "When what, darling?"

EDITH: "When the clock struck and reminded him that there was only just time to catch the last cheap train, and he had a return ticket." —Funny Folks.

TWEEDY'S FIRST ATTEMPT.

(And let us sincerely hope his last also.)

TWEEDY: "Haw, dear boy, look haw. Why is that charming vocalist like my umbrells?"

FRANK: "Aw—wheally couldn't—aw—say."

TWEEDY: "Because she's—aw—an incomparable Sangster. Ta-ta." —Funny Folks.

NOTHING LIKE SYSTEM.

BARBER: "You don't come and shave as often as you used, Mr. Maloney."

MR. MALONEY: "Shure, no, I don't, for be jabers, haven't I taken to shave myself, an' don't I do it just three times a week ivery blessed day but Sunday? an' thin I shave ivery day, beaded!" —Fun.

EPITAPH.

SHE WAS poor—a lovely wretch!

I was ugly—but was rich.

She was young and I was old;

She was bought and I was sold.

Now the best that can be said:

Is, I live, and she is dead!

Blessings here will never cease,

She and I are both at peace. —Fun.

A WILD GOOSE CHASE.

TIM: "Hallo, Patti what have you got there?"

PAT (carrying a live goose under his arm): "Faith, I've been after buying a goose."

TIM: "And where are the giblets?"

PAT: "Bedad, I forgot the giblets. I'll go back and fetch them." —Fun.

PRECAUTION.

MAMMA (anxiously): "My dear boy, what

have you been doing to yourself? What is the matter with your head?"

MASTER JACK: "Oh, there's nothing much the matter. I had a pain in the left temple this morning, so I tied it up in case it should spread."

—Judy.

ORDERS AGAIN.

ECONOMICAL LITTLE WIFE: "Well, I am sure, after all I don't see that we have much to thank the Robinsons for for sending us the box, when they themselves got it for nothing. They might have lent us their carriage!"

—Judy.

TWO ASIDES.

"Ah! there goes Brown, who used to live in Newman Street. Now he's an A.R.A., and evidently far too great a swell to remember the likes of me!"

"By George, if it ain't Jones—a Q.C., if you please, since we last met at Paddy's Green, and of course much too high and mighty to recollect my humble existence!"

(Think meanly of each other, and pass on.)

—Punch.

"A YELLOW-PEELING."

FARMER GILES: "Well, squire, I've done my best with the farm, but I can't pay my way any longer!"

SQUIRE: "In that case, Mr. Giles, no more can I! So the sooner we lay our heads together—"

—Punch.

BAKING SAID THAN DONE.

STOUT TRAVELLER (in the Eastern Counties): "My lad—which is the quickest way—for me to get to the station?"

STREET ARAB: "Wh' run bo', 'th' else yeow'll certain'y leawse th' time! There goo th' bell!"

—Punch.

BRINGING HIM TO THE POINT.

ADOLPHUS: "What is that noise, darling?"
DARLING: "Oh, it's only papa. Ever since he read in the papers of actions for breach of promise of marriage being abolished he is always going about cracking his whip."

ADOLPHUS: "Oh!" (Pauses reflectively.)
"Well, would it—er—be troubling you to—er—name the day?"

—Fanny Folks.

OBJECTS FOR THE "HABITUALS" ACT.

OLD INEBRIATE (in cab, who can't be made to understand that they want the number of his house): "My numb'r! How dar' you, p'lice-man? Mos' 'graceful! You so drunk don't know fare from driver? It's driver on box has numb'r; fare inside no numb'r. I'm fare. No num-numb'r!"

(And they have to knock at every door in Gower Street till they find where he lives.)

—Fanny Folks.

AN EYE-OPENER.

"Hi, conductor, shtop! I want von Eye Open."

"Well, you've got both eyes open, ain't ye?"

"No—no! I want von Eye Open."

"Very well, then; shtut t'other."

"No—no—no! I want—"

(And it came out after all that he wanted No. 1, High Holborn.)

—Fanny Folks.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR THE BOARD.

SCHOOLS OF THE PERIOD.

- Q. Who was Lord Beaconsfield?
A. A mystery man.
Q. What was Gladstone famous for?
A. Cutting down taxes and trees.
Q. Who was the favourite of the stage?
A. Connie Gilchrist.
Q. Who wrote the "Lady of Lyons"?
A. El. J. Byron.
Q. If Shakespeare spelt ruin at Drury Lane what did he spell at the Lyceum?
A. Gold.
Q. What did they mean by distress?
A. Lodgings in Belgravia instead of a house in Park Lane; taking an occasional stall at the open instead of a box for the season; and wearing a ball-dress a second time.
Q. Why did not Fred Vokes play Hamlet?

A. Because no new version of Hamlet could be got to justify Hamlet in throwing his legs over Ophelia's head.

—Fanny Folks.

STATISTICS.

STREET ACCIDENTS IN LONDON.—A return has been issued which shows that between January 1, 1878, and January 31, 1879, there were 3,253 street accidents within the Metropolitan Police District, 661 of which were caused by cabs, 219 by omnibuses and cars, 349 by broughams and carriages, 1,008 by light carts, 150 by waggons and drays, 553 by vans, one by fire engine, 174 by heavy carts, 3 by traction engines, 24 by covered vehicles, 13 by bicycles, and 98 by horsemen. The total number of persons injured was 3,342, of whom 1,703 were male and 580 female adults, and 759 were male and 225 female children. In 157 cases death resulted, while 2,693 recovered, and the result in 492 cases was unknown to the police. In the City of London Police District there were 619 street accidents, 212 being caused by cabs, 54 by omnibuses and cars, 32 by broughams and carriages, 123 by light carts, 12 by waggons and drays, 172 by vans, 7 by heavy carts, 7 by covered vehicles, and 5 by bicycles, and 1 by horseman. The number of persons injured was 619, of whom 389 were male, and 82 female adults, and 135 male and 13 female children. Nine of the injured persons died, 604 recovered, and the result of the remaining 6 cases was unknown to the police.

THE WOMAN'S DOWER.

(FROM THE GREEK OF ANACREON.)

NATURE, wise and prodigal,
Gives some special gift to all—
To oxen horns, with which they may
Push all obstacles away;
To horses hoofs, whose heavy blows
Warn away presumptuous foes;
To rabbits, whom wild beasts waylay,
Swift feet wherewith they run away;
In lions' jaws, above, beneath,
She plants a hideous gulf of teeth;
The birds, through her, when in affright,
Rescue themselves by sudden flight.
For man, what gift? Ah, he is fraught
With all the subtlety of thought.
But woman, favourite of Heaven!
To her enchanting grace is given.
Beauty is her commanding dower—
Than shields or spears it has more
power;
'Tis more than match for steel or fire,
It crowns the summit of desire—
Victor o'er wealth and power and wit,
The whole wide world bows down to it.

J. B.

GEMS.

THE way to honour a true man as he would be honoured, when death forces others to enter upon his labours, is to continue them as he would have done had he lived.

EARLY to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise; but early to ryes and tardy to bed makes a man's nose turn cardinal red.

LAZINESS travels so slowly that poverty soon overtakes her.

He is wise who never acts without reason, never against it.

A NEW sketch, entitled "A Child of the Regiment," was given by the Vokes family on Saturday afternoon at the Imperial Theatre. The programme also included "The Belles of the Kitchen."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

STRAWBERRY JELLY.—Stem the strawberries, put them in a pan, and with a wooden spoon or potato-masher rub them fine. Put a sieve over a pan, and inside of the sieve spread a piece of thin muslin; strain the juice through this, and to a pint add one pound of sugar, with a quarter of an ounce of isinglass, dissolved in water, to every five pounds of sugar. When the sugar is dissolved, set the kettle over the fire and boil it till it is to a jelly. Pour it into glasses while it is warm, and paste them when cold.

RED GOOSEBERRY JAM.—Take the rough, hairy gooseberries, and to every pound of picked fruit allow three-quarters pound of loaf sugar. Boil the gooseberries with a little water or red currant juice, stirring well for one hour; add the sugar, and boil again for forty minutes, skimming and stirring all the time.

PINEAPPLE JELLY is made on the same principle as any other sweet jelly, only the syrup is boiled with the pineapple cut in slices for a short time, when it is strained, and poured into a saucepan, to boil again before putting into the jelly bag.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ON Whit-Monday the Comédie Française Company began their series of representations at the Gaiety.

A BRIGADE of lady dusters and charwomen has been established at a ritualistic church in the country.

A GERMAN poet says a young girl is a fishing rod; the eyes are the hook, the smile the bait, the lover the gudgeon, and marriage the butter in which he is fried.

"DIPPED into a weak solution of accomplishments," is the term now applied to those of our girls professing to be highly educated.

MANY acres of fields at Kilburn are being fenced in for the International Agricultural Show, which commences on the 30th inst. and closes July 7.

THE "MISSING LINK."—The "missing link" has been discovered in the Siwalik rocks of the Punjab. Mr. Theobald, of the Geological Survey, has found the skull of an anthropoid ape, an adult female, which must have been as large as a female gorilla or orang. This is the first fossil found in India which bears a resemblance to existing apes; and this animal must have been as distinct as the gorilla and the chimpanzee, or any other two types of ape. It is, therefore, proposed to give it a new name—*Palaopithecus*.

THE STRING TELEPHONE AND DEAFNESS.—Mr. H. A. Severn, of Herne Hill, writing to a contemporary, says that deaf persons—or, at all events, persons very hard of hearing—can hear even a whisper spoken into a string telephone, the string of which is carried to their forehead and fastened round the head in a loop. The "Electrician" says the instrument he uses is a tin pot, about the size of a tumbler, having a parchment diaphragm.

A NAVAL gentleman and his daughter staying at X—, having received an invitation to a party a short distance off, sent to the railway station and ordered a fly to be at their residence at 8 p.m., the next day. The following morning, at 8 o'clock, a fly arrived. When asked his business, he said he had come by order of his honour at 8 p.m. "Well, and what do you suppose '8 p.m.' means then?" "Why eight, punctual mind," was the reply.

It is in contemplation to throw a light foot-bridge across Pall Mall, from the top of Cockspur-street to the foot of the Haymarket. Such a structure would be an immense convenience. During the season the stream of carriages at this point is often so great that the possibility of crossing becomes a question of time if not of peril, and that too, notwithstanding the excellent police arrangements. There is here the convergent traffic of four fashionable thoroughfares.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. Z.—According to recent geological researches by Mr. Beade, the estimated age of the world is 600,000,000 years.

"LA ROCHEFOUCAULT."—Send your advertisement to the Editor, who will cause it to be inserted. We make no charge.

JAMES H.—1. Marquis or marquess means the same—originally one who possessed land on the borders of an enemy's country, and was bound to protect the frontiers. It is now a title of nobility next below that of a duke, and above that of a count. 2. The public-house sign of the Catherine Wheel was no doubt taken from the name of the instrument on which St. Catherine suffered torture. 3. Ethnology is that part of science which treats of the different races of men, their origin, distinguishing characteristics, settlements, &c., &c. 4. A misogynist is a woman-hater.

CONSTANT READER.—1. Handwriting very good. 2. Not being strong enough for domestic work, we would recommend you to look out for a situation as assistant in a shop. 3. If you know the young man's address, there would be no impropriety in forwarding the slippers.

CYPRUS JACK.—THE LONDON READER can be forwarded to you post free for 1s. 6d. quarterly, payable in advance. Y. C. N. L.—Your question about the dragon is exhaustively treated and answered on page 160. We will search for your M&S.

MARKO TYRE.—The kilt and bonnet is now almost wholly confined to a few Highland regiments, but we cannot give you their names.

STRAWBERRY.—Forward full name and address to the Editor, who will advise you by post. Enclose stamped envelope for reply.

E. W.—Back rent is recoverable in the county court; if a lodger thirteen weeks, can be sued for.

CONSTANT READER.—If you are unable to get the book, and will forward to the Editor the price of the work in stamps (3s. 6d.), enclosing name and address, he will obtain it for you.

T. B.—State your circumstances and your expectations to the young lady.

N. M.—We do not make any charge for the insertion of matrimonial advertisements. They are inserted in the order in which they reach us, but must be accompanied with full name and address, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

KATE thanks us for recommending Cooper's Effervescent Lozenges, which she testifies are efficacious; they are portable and convenient. The simplest form of administering refreshment is in the form of a lozenge, and those of our readers who experience an unpleasant sensation in the throat, or wish to allay their thirst in an inexpensive manner, should send for a box and enclose one shilling and twopenny to the manufacturer, 36, Oxford Street, W.C.

READER.—On the subject of advice, our correspondents have been most liberal, and although it would be quite impossible to adopt all their suggestions, yet they may be assured we respect them all.

B. W.—We insert "rhymes" free of charge when they are suitable and we have space to devote to our rhyming correspondents.

ECCLESIASTIC.—It is a nice little story, but we do not pay for such, as we have quite a number furnished us gratuitously.

SAMUEL.—To clean gold lace: Burn some roche alum, then powder it very fine, and sift it. Dip a clean, soft brush into the powdered alum, and rub the gold lace with it. Afterwards wipe it with a clean, soft flannel. Gold embroidery may be brightened in the same manner.

TRIXIE.—When you have engaged yourself to a man all testing and experimenting should be at an end. The plan of which you speak would be unwise in every way. You had better do what is right always and hope for the best. You are perhaps paying the penalty of former recklessness in regard to human affection.

W.—The practice of drinking hot liquids is exceedingly injurious, even in the case of that most excellent of all beverages, tea. The best temperature for drinks is about that of the human body—from 90 to 100 deg. Fahr. When exceeding this heat they injure the teeth, as well as the stomach, relaxing the surfaces with which they come in contact, and lowering the tone of the vessels.

A. B., nineteen, light brown hair, hazel eyes, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-two.

BLANCHÉ and LILLIE, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Blanché is twenty-two, tall, dark, domesticated, fond of dancing. Lillie is twenty-one, medium height, fair, fond of music. Respondents must be about twenty-three, good-looking, tall, dark, loving.

DIBCHICK and OILSKIN, two corporals in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Dibchick is twenty-six, light curly hair, dark eyes, fond of music and dancing. Oilskin is twenty-eight, handsome, brown hair, blue eyes.

JENNY and ALICE, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. Jenny is eighteen, fair, domesticated, blue eyes, fond of children and music. Alice is eighteen, tall, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

MILLY V., twenty-five, curly hair, blue eyes, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age.

HIGHLAND MARY, BRIGHT EYES, and ROSEBUD, three friends, would like to correspond with three young gentlemen. Highland Mary is twenty-five, brown hair, grey eyes, tall, fair. Bright Eyes is twenty-three, dark hair and eyes, tall. Rosebud is twenty-two, dark hair, blue eyes, medium height. Respondents must be tall, dark, fond of home.

THE CHARM OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

AN angel in the house? Ah, yes;
There is a precious angel there—
A woman, formed to soothe and bless,
Good, if she seemed not fair—
A kindly, faithful, patient wife,
Cheerful, and of a temper mild,
One who can lend new charms to life,
And make man reconciled.

Oh, 'tis a pleasant thing to see
Such beings going to and fro,
With aspect genial and free,
Yet pure as spotless snow—
One who performs her duties, too,
With steady and becoming grace,
Giving to each attention due
In fitting time and place.

One who can use her husband's means
With careful thrift from day to day,
And, when misfortune interposes,
Put needless wants away—
Who smooths the wrinkles from his brow
When more than common cares oppress,
And cheers him—faithful to her vow—
With hopeful tenderness.

One who, when sorrow comes, can feel
With woman's tenderness of heart,
And yet can strive with quiet zeal
To ease another's smart—
One who, when Fortune's sun grows bright,
And flings the clouds of care aside,
Can hark with pleasure in its light,
Yet feel no foolish pride.

One who can check with saint-like power
Wild thoughts that spring to dangerous birth,
And wake pure feelings, as the shower
Of spring awakes the earth—
Bring forth the latent virtues shrouded
Within the comfort of the breast,
And to the weak and tortured mind
Bring confidence and rest.

Good neighbour, not to envy prone,
True wife in luxury or need,
Fond mother, not unwisely shown,
Blameless in thought and deed—
Whoever claims so rare a wife
Thou shouldst his earnest words be given:
"The is the angel of my life,
And makes my home a heaven." J. C. P.

J. W., twenty-two, dark, hazel eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady who is thoroughly domesticated and fond of dancing.

ROB ROY, X. Y. Z., and CLERK, three friends, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. Rob Roy is tall, fair, of a loving disposition. X. Y. Z. is good-looking, fond of home and children. Clerk is tall, fond of music, loving.

FURRY JACK, nineteen, a seaman in the Royal Navy, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a young lady.

CAROLUS, forty, a steward in the merchant service, tall, of a loving disposition, fond of music, a Roman Catholic, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony.

R. J. M., twenty-three, fair, tall, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady. Must be about twenty, dark, loving, and fond of home and children.

AUSTRALIA, twenty-nine, would like to correspond with a widow with a view to matrimony. Respondent must be of medium height, thoroughly domesticated, and loving.

LOUIE V., fair, brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, and loving, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about nineteen, good-looking, dark.

KATE and DORA, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen about twenty-one. Kate is eighteen, brown hair, violet eyes, medium height, fond of home, of a loving disposition. Dora is nineteen, dark hair and eyes, domesticated, fond of music.

BLUE-EYED CHARLIE, thirty-one, a mechanic, would like to correspond with a young lady. Must be dark, of medium height.

HETTY B., forty-three, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a gentleman about the same age.

ROSE and VIOLET, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen in the medical profession. Rose is fair, medium height, good figure. Violet is tall, of a loving disposition, fond of music.

FLASHING JOE and JAMES BUNGE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Flashing Joe is twenty-five, medium height, fond of children. James Bunge is twenty-seven, tall, loving, and fond of dancing and music.

PRIMROSE, DAISY, and JASMINE, three friends, would like to correspond with three gentlemen (actors preferred). Primrose is tall, dark. Daisy is fair, blue eyes, good-looking. Jasmine is of medium height, golden hair, grey eyes, affectionate.

LILY and MAY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Lily is graceful, brown hair and eyes, good-looking. May is tall, light hair, blue eyes, handsome.

GASBLOWER, FIVE-BOB-A-DAY ARTFUL, and QUICKLY, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Gasblower is medium height, dark hair and eyes, good-looking. Five-Bob-A-Day Artful is twenty-one, of a loving disposition, curly hair, hazel eyes, fond of dancing. Quickly is twenty-two, auburn hair, hazel eyes, fair, loving.

EMILY, ADA, and MARIA, three friends, would like to correspond with three young men with a view to matrimony. Emily is seventeen, tall, dark, brown hair, hazel eyes. Ada is eighteen, medium height, light brown hair, hazel eyes. Maria is twenty, fair, brown hair, light blue eyes, fond of home. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-one.

LILLIE and MARY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Lillie is eighteen, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and children. Mary is seventeen, dark hair, black eyes, fond of home. Respondents must be about twenty-one.

LOVING NANCE, dark, medium height, curly hair, would like to correspond with a young man with a view to matrimony.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

H. D. is responded to by—Thomas W., twenty-three, medium height, dark.

HARRY by—S. H., twenty-six, brown hair and eyes, and thinks he's all she requires.

CONSTANT by—G. M., twenty-two, tall, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

NIGHTINGALE by—Skylark, twenty-one, tall, dark hair, of a loving disposition.

C. B. by—E. L.

F. L. by—C. E.

F. B. by—Charlie M., twenty-two, fond of home, dark hair and eyes, tall.

MASTROGO by—Maudie, twenty-four, dark brown hair and eyes, tall.

CUTTER by—James O., nineteen, of a loving disposition, tall, fair.

JOLLY BOAT by—Bessie, medium height, good-looking, dark.

GALLERY by—Violet, light blue eyes, fond of music.

L. C. by—Myrtle.

EDWARD by—Troy.

WALTER by—Daisy, nineteen, dark, medium height, loving.

TOM by—Violet, nineteen, fair.

R. H. by—Fixed Bayonets, twenty-one, fond of home and children.

NELLIE by—Terror of the Dardanelles, twenty-four, light hair, hazel eyes, fair.

ANNIE by—Cyprus Jack, twenty-one, dark hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

R. D. by—A. K., twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, tall, fond of home and children.

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